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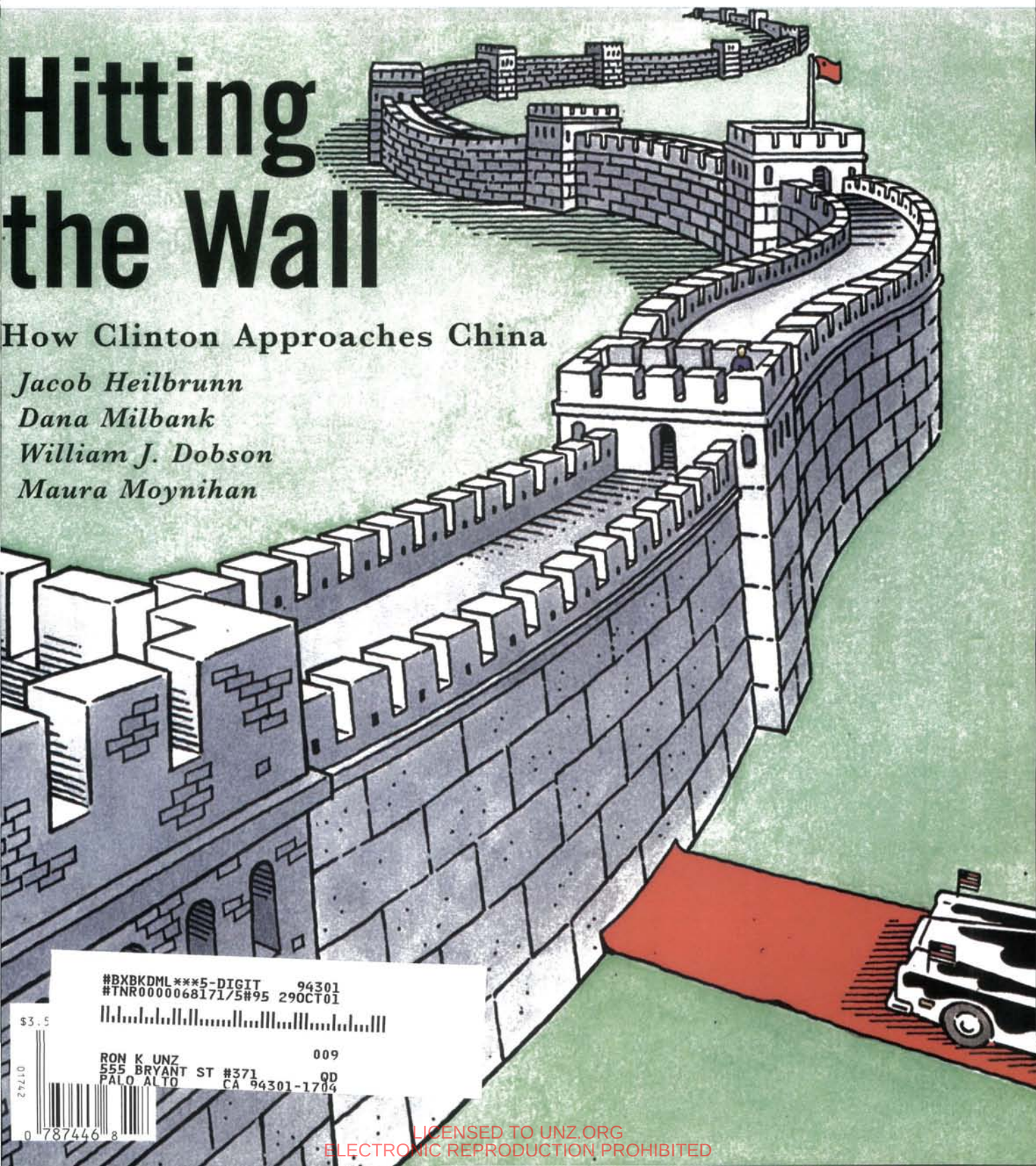
David Rieff on Richard Holbrooke • James Wood on a New Master



Hitting the Wall

How Clinton Approaches China

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

JULY 6, 1998

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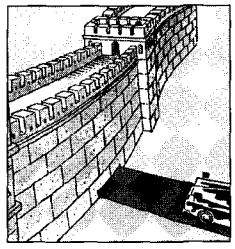

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CORRESPONDENCE

Leading universities

To the editors:

In "Small Men on Campus" (June 1), David Greenberg laments the fact that college presidents no longer speak out on the great issues. And, if they do, no one listens.

But the greatness of a college president must be evaluated by different standards at different times. These days the job of the college president is not to share the wisdom of the academy with the public. It is to protect the university from the intrusion of corporate policies and corporate values that dominate so much of the rest of our so-called public life. A college president ought to be defending the idea of an ivory tower against those who would turn the university into a place to educate technicians. To do this while keeping the college from bankruptcy is quite enough.

C. FRED ALFORD
Professor of Government
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland

To the editors:

"No longer plucked from the faculty's ranks, [college] presidents are likely to have abandoned research at an early age for the managerial fast track, switching from one school to another like journeymen basketball coaches." So says David Greenberg.

How ironic that he picks as his prize example Nan Keohane, former president of Wellesley and now of Duke, given Wellesley's commendable courage in appointing her straight from the Stanford faculty's ranks, with no administrative experience whatsoever, in 1981. After twelve successful years there, she went from presiding over a liberal arts college to presiding over a research university. A new "managerial fast track"? Hardly—Nathan Pusey did the same thing, from Lawrence College (Wisconsin) to Harvard, 45 years ago.

RICHARD W. LYMAN
President Emeritus
Stanford University
Palo Alto, California

To the editors:

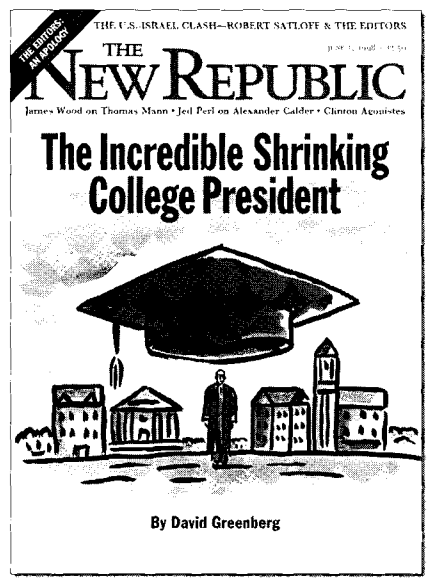
David Greenberg offers an interesting sketch of the job of college president but undervalues the achievement of those who've held the job in the late twentieth century. Any fair assessment should acknowledge that these leaders have contributed to making the universities and colleges of the U.S. dominant in the world in both research and education and that they have managed this in a period of declining federal support.

RICHARD SALLER
Dean, University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

To the editors:

David Greenberg's article reminds me of the story about the professor of ichthyology who became a college president. His main chore, of course, was fundraising, and he was once heard to lament that "every time I memorize the name of a new donor I forget the name of an old fish."

RABBI SAMUEL M. SILVER
Boca Raton, Florida


THE EDITORS' APOLOGY
THE U.S.-ISRAEL CLASH—ROBERT SATLOFF & THE EDITORS
THE NEW REPUBLIC
James Wood on Thomas Mann • Jed Perl on Alexander Calder • Clinton Apologists
The Incredible Shrinking College President
By David Greenberg

To the editors:

David Greenberg is a bit too easy on latter-day college and university presidents. His account makes it seem as if irresistible forces, like laws of nature, prevented college presidents from assuming leadership roles in our society.

Forces there certainly are. The need to raise money induces circumspection in the expression of controversial opinions. The desire of everyone on campus to feel a sense of belonging prompts frenetic dashing from one meeting or event to another. And the need to keep the budget in line and the bureaucracy functioning smoothly forces presidents to devote endless hours to managing, managing, managing.

But, while these forces are powerful, they are not irresistible. For one donor who is offended by the expression of a controversial opinion, another is enthusiastic. In any case, trustees and donors are proud to have their president quoted and listened to, even if they disagree. A sense of belonging—to the degree that it is possible in some of our outsized institutions—is induced equally well or better by a leader who articulates a vision and sets a tone than by one who omits no meeting or reception. That there is a need to manage effectively is undeniable. But technocrats—people in charge of means—can be hired by those who are concerned with ends and have a vision to articulate and ideas to implement.

RUDOLPH H. WEINGARTNER
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

To the editors:

According to David Greenberg, Harvard's president, Neil Rudenstine, has said that "a whole range of issues that university presidents might once have spoken out on are so knowledge-intensive that, unless you want to make a mistake every other word, you'd better watch out what you talk about." How ironic that the head of the most famous institution of learning in the world should take refuge in a lack of learning. In a country whose educational system has for the most part failed its children so utterly, it falls to those who have a forum to take some sort of stand.

BARTH LANDOR
Chicago, Illinois

Invested in Israel

To the editors:

Your editorial regarding Israel ("'A Crisis of Partnership,'" June 1) put a negative spin on Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's role in the peace process. You portray both her and the United States as more meddler than mediator. But, with the U.S. contributing about $3 billion per year to the economy of Israel, I view the U.S. as more a concerned shareholder than a country sticking its nose where it doesn't belong. The treatment of the Palestinian people should be a human rights concern of any country investing in Israel.

And, while you claim that the majority of the American public is pro-Jewish, I would like to offer a pro-Palestinian view. I would venture to say that any Gentile who, like myself, has visited Israel for an extended stay would return pro-Palestinian. The Jews have treated Palestinians as we have treated Native Americans. Palestinians have been run off their land and lost their homes to their conquerors. The time has come for them to regain their birthplace. In the same way the Jews were given a homeland by the United Nations in 1948, I believe the Palestinian people should be granted a home in 1998.

MARK GOTVALD
Pleasant Hill, California

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To the editors:
Your editorial on the so-called crisis in U.S.-Israeli relations has much to praise, in particular its analysis of the heavy-handed tactics of the Clinton administration and the dubious, long-term intentions of the Palestinian leadership. Integrity, however, requires an objective appraisal of Benjamin Netanyahu as well. His motives are not as pure as your editorial suggests: His tactics of delay and postponement result as much from his efforts to hold together his coalition as they do from security concerns. Unwilling to face the voters before he must, Netanyahu refuses to make any decision that may lead to the collapse of his government from the ideological right or the more pragmatic center, and he simultaneously seeks to deflect criticism onto others. Not that any of this should surprise us: These are time-honored practices among politicians caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place.

LAURENCE KOTLER-BERKOWITZ
Providence, Rhode Island

Sandstorm ahead

To the editors:
While Mrs. Clinton's statement that it would be in the "long-term interests of the Middle East for Palestine to be a state" may have been undiplomatic (not to mention offensive to the delicate sensibilities of Benjamin Netanyahu's Cabinet), the United States does not have the luxury of waiting for the Israelis and Palestinians to reach an accommodation ("Shifting Sands," by Robert Satloff, June 1). The continuing expansion of Israel's West Bank settlements may well make such an accommodation impossible—a result that would be decidedly adverse to the interests of all parties, including the United States.

JEROME M. BALSAM
New York, New York

Pierre Salinger replies

To the editors:
I am very sad at the way Nurith C. Aizenman has written about me ("The Ignoble Bard," May 4). She obviously does not understand the truth.

My credibility remains strong around the world. Even if there were some ridiculous articles about me in the media, people understand the important things I have done in life. The press is not looking into the TWA 800 case at all. Earlier this year, Admiral Thomas Moorer, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, came out with a statement that was not published in many major papers. This is what he said: "All evidence would point to a missile. It absolutely deserves more investigation—a lot more.... This time, I wouldn't let the FBI do it." And, of course, my basic information did not come from the Internet because I was not tied to the Internet.

On the Qaddafi book, Aizenman never mentions the most important thing. When the Libyans changed their mentality, they sent letters to Secretary of State James Baker and then-U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, pointing out that they had stopped terrorism, had no terrorism camps, had no chemical weapons, and other important things. They told the U.S. and the U.N. that, if they did not believe what Libya was saying, they should send investigators. Neither the U.S. nor the U.N. ever answered these letters.

On the Pan Am 103 case, the Libyans have been saying that they are prepared to have trials of the two suspects anywhere in the world except in the United States and the United Kingdom. Recently, The Hague has been saying it should do the trial run by British judges and experts. In the 1950s, when the U.K. had a big influence on Libya, they created a law that no Libyan could be tried outside of his country. This is not the only country where these laws exist. The same law exists in Israel. And, by the way, I am not the only person who believes Libya is innocent of the Lockerbie bombing.

Finally, Aizenman wrote the wrong name of the company where I work. It is not Archive Unlimited. It is Archivum Limited.

If my credibility were going down, I wouldn't be doing the important work I am doing. Just one example: I work for the Globe and Development Corporation here in Virginia, which has arrived at high technology on one of the most important environmental problems in the world—nuclear waste. And I am working with many European countries to move forward on cutting back nuclear waste.

PIERRE SALINGER
Washington, D.C.

Front-row fan

To the editors:
Michael J. Sandel frets about luxury skyboxes separating the "upper crust from the common folk in the stands below" ("Spoiled Sports," May 25). With similar trepidation I entered Lambeau Field to watch a Green Bay Packers game last season, expecting to feel humiliated by the carpet-dwellers high above the crowd on a luxury platform that now encompasses

continued on page 45

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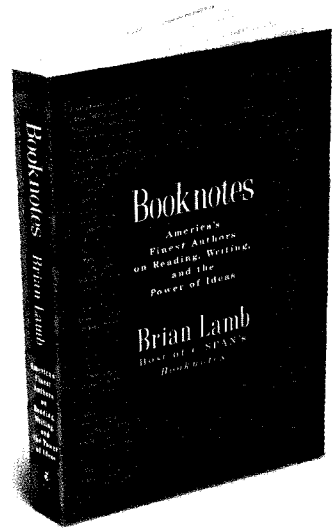

Which author was interviewed in the White House barber shop for a presidential staff position?
See page 240

Which acclaimed historian frequently writes in the nude?
See page 11

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FROM WASHINGTON

Trouble spot

The refugees are streaming out of Kosovo, fleeing villages that have been shelled or burned by Serbian troops. Reports trickling out of the combat zones speak of several hundred people killed already and more war on the way. To all appearances, it's Bosnia redux. Human rights activists and foreign policy pundits ask: Where Slobodan Milosevic's soldiers move in, can ethnic cleansing ever be far behind?

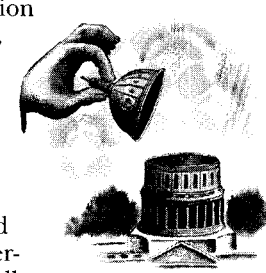
Already the chilling signs of a bloodbath in the making have prompted calls for American-led military intervention. Stopping the Serbs, the argument goes, requires the prompt, preemptive use of force. The alternative is another genocide, this time with Albanians rather than Bosnian Muslims as the victims. This, we are told, is the lesson of Bosnia.

But if that is the lesson of Bosnia—and I agree that the West's weak and belated response was to blame for much of what happened there—it is a lesson we should be careful not to misapply. Kosovo and Bosnia are very different, and the origins of conflict in the two places are different as well. A Kosovo strategy derived mechanically from the perceived lessons of Bosnia may backfire, possibly at great cost to the U.S.

When war broke out in Bosnia in 1992, the country was a multiethnic former Yugoslav republic whose population was about 45 percent Muslim, 30 percent Serb, and 20 percent Croat, with a sprinkling of others. Although its economy was not advanced by Western standards, it was relatively developed in the context of the former Yugoslavia's uneven economic configuration. Sarajevo was a modern city under the influence of a well-educated and progressive elite; it was one of several large towns in Bosnia where ethnic comity had put down real roots. The only sensible political arrangement in such a state was a multiethnic democracy that guaranteed the rights of all groups—and such an outcome was at least achievable if not likely.

Furthermore, the United Nations had recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina in May 1992, conferring the imprimatur of international legal status on the government in Sarajevo. That government seemed to be doing what it could to rein in its extreme elements and come up with a peaceful solution. In the end, it was all undone by ethnic chauvinist politicians—principally Milosevic, who unleashed the Yugoslav army across what was, it bears repeating, an internationally recognized border between Yugoslavia and Bosnia. Thus, the challenge posed by the Serbian attack stemmed not only from the slaughter that ensued but from the violation of international law which that attack represented.

Kosovo, by contrast, is one of the poorest and most backward areas in Europe. There is no tradition of ethnic intermingling, much less harmony. Rather, the ethnic dynamic is dominated by the ancient, and authentic, hatred between some two million Muslim Albanians and about 200,000 Serbs, who regard Kosovo as the locus of Serbia's national origins. The Albanian majority cannot and will not be ruled by the Serbs. The Serbs cannot and will not let anyone else exercise sovereignty over this sacred piece of turf. The conflict was suffocated during the reign of Tito, who granted the Albanians autonomy and a seat on the eight-member Yugoslav collective presidency. Milosevic, however, has repeatedly treated Kosovo as a whipping boy, imposing a draconian apartheid-like police state and treating his own Serbian population to a steady diet of demagoguery about the Albanian menace.



Not only does the Serbian-Albanian clash have more authentic, and hence even more intractable, roots than the corresponding tensions in Bosnia, but the international dimension of the problem is completely different. No international body or foreign state (except, in a muted way, Albania itself) recognizes Kosovo as anything but an integral part of Yugoslavia and, more than that, a province of Serbia. This is true for the good reason that independence for Kosovo's Albanians would destabilize a whole swath of Albanian-populated territory between Bulgaria and the Adriatic. Thus, there is no issue of cross-border aggression here. Indeed, when Milosevic sent his forces in to create a free-fire zone along the border with Albania, he could at least claim to be acting within his own sovereign ambit against a violation of Yugoslavia's legally recognized territorial space—namely, the massive smuggling of arms from Albania.

Another crucial point is that the Albanians themselves initiated the current round of fighting in Kosovo, through guerrilla attacks on Serb militia units. There is no excuse for the murder and atrocities committed in the Serbian counterattack. But it was a counterattack. For almost a decade prior to that, a highly disciplined Albanian shadow government, led by Ibrahim Rugova, had kept the peace in the province, protesting Serb rule by organizing alternative institutions but remaining strictly nonviolent. That arrangement, it appears, enjoyed some tacit indulgence by Milosevic. The most extreme Albanian separatists, however, became impatient as the unbearable Serb dictatorship lingered on with no change in sight. And they have learned their own lessons of Bosnia—that the best way to get the attention, and perhaps the help, of the outside world is to provoke a bloody crackdown in which hapless civilians will inevitably be the biggest victims.

Thus, the best analogy by which to understand the atrocities in Kosovo is not that of Bosnia and ethnic cleansing. Rather, this shapes up as a colonial war between a guerrilla force that cannot be routed and an occupier who will not leave. Serbian atrocities, barbaric as they are, correspond to a brutal military dynamic, which is not necessarily the same as a genocidal plan. These massacres are like those committed by the French in Algeria, the Soviets in Afghanistan, and everywhere else in the world where alien counterinsurgency forces have sought to drain the sea of the people in which guerrillas swim.

Given the backwardness and remoteness of Kosovo, and its ingrained traditions of blood vengeance, it may well be too late to stop this war from spinning out of control. What little hope there is lies not in talk of massive U.S. intervention (which will only harden the Albanian extremists' position) but in urgent diplomacy aimed at somehow reestablishing the tense but peaceful prewar standoff between Albanians and Serbs. Only then can negotiations begin on a longer-term autonomy plan that would give the Albanians more rights but would leave this emotionally fraught patch of turf still within Yugoslavia's borders. To that end, the recent NATO air exercise over Albania, which seems to have prompted Milosevic to agree to talks with Rugova, the titular leader of Kosovo's Albanians, was a useful bit of muscle-flexing. But the U.S. should think long and hard before committing itself more deeply.

CHARLES LANE

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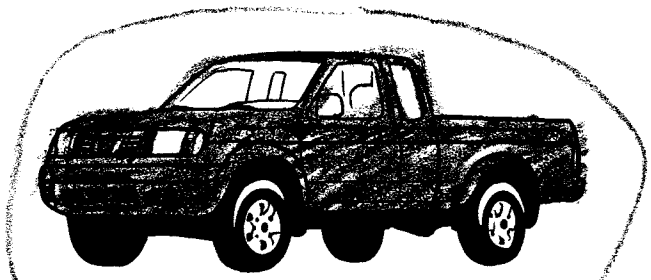

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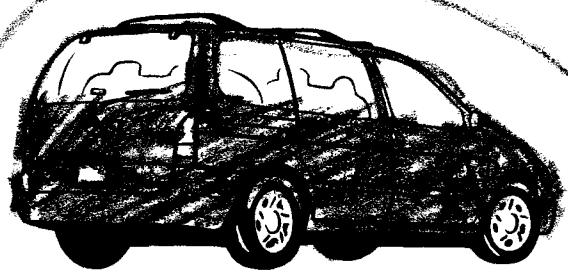

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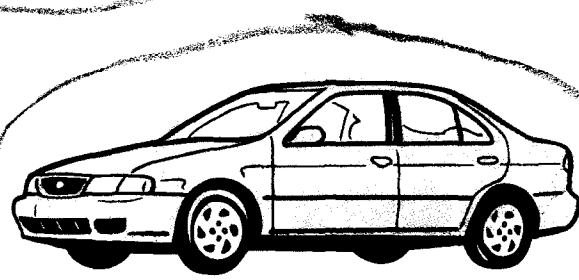

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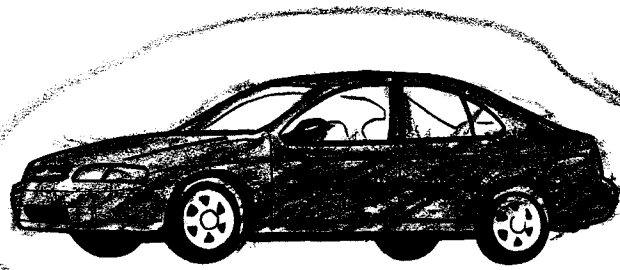

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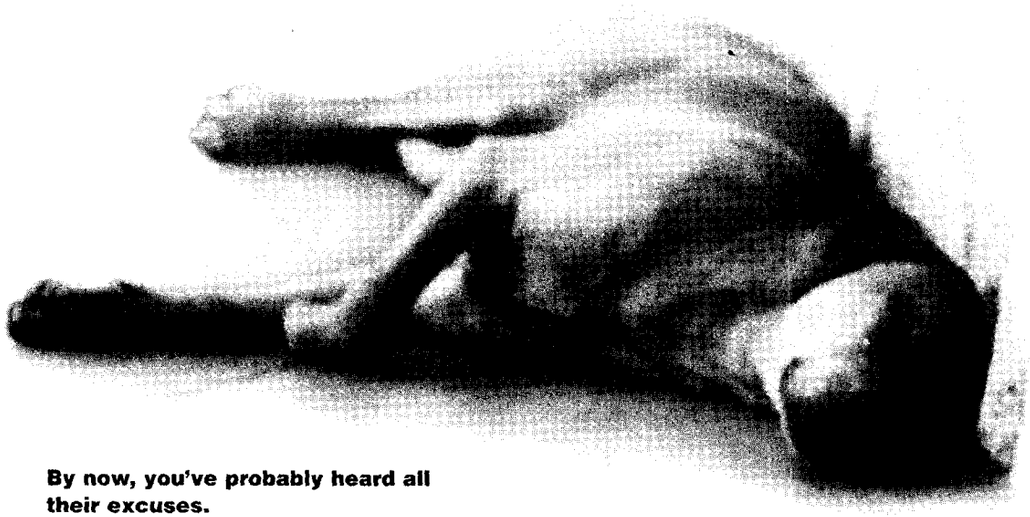
How Long Will These Sleeping Dogs Lie?



By now, you've probably heard all their excuses.

The Big Dogs, AT&T and MCI, are still howling that they can't compete in local telephone markets. It's just too difficult. It requires too much effort.

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Recently, the Federal Communications Commission held hearings in which smaller, local competitors described their success in competing against the Bell companies.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JULY 6, 1998

A QUESTION OF CONTENT

All of Washington is abuzz over Steven Brill's account of the first three weeks of Kenneth Starr's investigation of Bimbroglio. Buzz, of course, is exactly what Brill was trying to create when he splashed his tale of Starr's alleged manipulation of a credulous press across the cover of his new media watchdog magazine, *Brill's Content.* And the issue at the heart of the uproar, Brill's claim that Starr and his deputies committed a "felony" by mounting an off-the-record spin-control campaign aimed at their favorite Washington reporters, is, indeed, open to dispute. Starr vehemently denies the charge; as we read them, the relevant legal strictures on what prosecutors can and cannot tell the press are not as cut-and-dried as Brill contends.

But what interests us most is some of the material in Brill's exposé that, so far at least, has not been disputed. First, there's Brill's story of how Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky were drawn into a kind of sting operation engineered by Lucianne Goldberg and Linda Tripp with the goal of generating evidence of a sexual liaison between Lewinsky and the president. ("In a sense, this is true," concedes Goldberg's son Jonah, who was involved, and who blasts Brill in a *New York Post* piece.) Brill provides a detailed account of how Goldberg and Tripp tried to create a connection between the alleged affair and the Paula Jones case so that *Newsweek* would be able to write about the Lewinsky allegations in a way that would stir up interest in their book proposal.

Accordingly, Brill reports that Goldberg urged Tripp to suggest that Lewinsky use a courier service owned by Goldberg's brother to send love letters to the president. (Goldberg then obligingly instructed *Newsweek* on how to obtain the billing records from this company.) Tripp then called the Paula Jones legal team and the independent counsel's office and urged them to subpoena Lewinsky. And, after Starr's investigators met with Tripp, she promptly briefed Jones's lawyers in a way that enabled them to spring the Lewinsky allegations on Clinton during his own January 17 deposition.

In response to Brill, Starr claims that he didn't know that Tripp had briefed Jones's lawyers until several days after the president's deposition. If Starr is right about that, that would undercut any claim that Clinton was a victim of *government* entrapment. But, whether Starr was acting wittingly or unwittingly, his investigation of the president's and Lewinsky's purported perjury about sex in the Jones case stems from what you might call private sector entrapment.

It's true, as Jonah Goldberg writes, that the mere fact Clinton and Lewinsky were set up doesn't mean they're innocent. But, in ordinary criminal cases brought by ordinary prosecutors acting under ordinary constraints of prosecutorial discretion, jurors are properly reluctant to convict defendants who they believe have been deliberately gulled into incriminating themselves. (That's how the government blew its case against Marion Barry.) This tendency of jurors is one of the subtle ways our democracy checks prosecutorial overreaching. Of course, it's Clinton's bad luck that Starr's prosecution, which has been anything but ordinary, probably can't end up in front of a jury, because, as we've argued before (see "Sex, Lies, and Audiotape," February 9), the president of the United States can't be indicted before he's been impeached by the House of Representatives and convicted by the Senate.

Then there's the matter of obstruction of justice. Without evidence that Clinton and his friend Vernon Jordan obstructed justice (rather than simply lied in their civil depositions) in the Jones case, a good deal of the wind would go out of Starr's sails. And Brill shows that, in the Tripp-Lewinsky tapes that Goldberg provided to *Newsweek* and that formed the basis for the media's initial reporting about Starr's investigation, there is no unambiguous evidence that Clinton or Jordan instructed Lewinsky to lie in her Jones deposition. The evidence of obstruction, if any, must be on tapes that Starr himself produced by having the FBI wire Linda Tripp and then engage Monica Lewinsky in a conversation scripted by Starr's investigators.

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But, in his oral argument against the White House's claims of executive privilege, which has only recently been unsealed, Starr told Judge Norma Holloway Johnson that he needed to interrogate White House aides Bruce Lindsey and Sidney Blumenthal for the following reason: "If there is no evidence of White House involvement in obstruction of justice, or if there is, it is not going to be on paper and it's not going to be on tapes. It will be conversations, between human beings." This remarkable—and underreported—statement at least creates an inference that the tapes Starr has in hand do not contain firm evidence of obstruction of justice.

The debate over Brill's article should not obscure two underlying realities. The first is that serious allegations against the president must be investigated *resolutely and thoroughly*. The second, however, is that those allegations must also be investigated fairly and expeditiously. After almost five months of poking into the tawdry Lewinsky matter, Ken Starr has yet to publicly lay before Congress or a court any proof that the president's conduct in the Whitewater case is linked with his conduct in the Jones case—or even that he obstructed justice in the latter case alone. If Ken Starr has such evidence, he should file a report to Congress as soon as possible. If he does not, he should close down his investigation—spin control operation and all. •

NOTEBOOK

MISSILE MESSAGE: Taking a cue, perhaps, from the recent candor of India and Pakistan, North Korea has publicly declared what the U.S. has long known only through intelligence sources: It has an ambitious ballistic missile program whose goals are not merely to menace the Stalinist state's neighbors in Northeast Asia but also to make money by exporting the weapons around the world. The real question is: What does the Clinton administration propose to do about this? For two years, the administration has been trying to negotiate some restraint on missile development by the North Koreans, a negotiation whose futility is now manifest to all. More troubling, *The Washington Post* reports that North Korea's aim in announcing its outrageous behavior was to induce Washington to further *relax* its policy of economic sanctions. Here's how the *Post*'s Kevin Sullivan explains Pyongyang's reasoning: The starving country protests that its command economy is so bankrupt that the only way it can make money is by exporting missiles to the likes of Pakistan. Therefore, the United States should supply the North more fuel oil and other benefits under the troubled 1994 nuclear deal that bound North Korea to freeze its nuclear-bomb-making program. This is a brazen challenge—and an embarrassment—not only to the Clinton administration but also to new South Korean President Kim Dae Jung, who has recently delighted the Clintonites by abandoning the previous South Korean government's hard line and calling for even cuddlier "engagement" of Pyongyang. Sullivan writes that "[b]y pressing the missile point just three days after Kim's return [from Washington] to Seoul, officials in North Korea may be hoping to capitalize on any new softening of Washington's resolve on sanctions." In other words, the North, emboldened by the success of its previous efforts at nuclear blackmail, is ratcheting up the pressure with a new round of ballistic extortion. This display of arrogance should prompt both Seoul and Washington to rethink their appeasement of Kim Jong Il—before it's too late.

HOW ABOUT NONE OF THE ABOVE?

Is homosexuality sin, sickness or choice?

—*The Washington Times*, June 17, 1998

CRYSTAL BALL AWARD:

Surprises not expected at Tony awards

—*The Denver Post*, June 7, 1998
(Thanks to Pete Helseth of Evergreen, Colorado.)

HOME NEWS: As of this issue, TNR welcomes our newest contributing editor, New York-based Lee Siegel, whose writing on culture and politics has graced not only these pages (see "From Stalin to SoHo," February 16, 1998) but also those of *The Atlantic Monthly*, *ARTnews*, and many other publications. We also bid fond farewell to two members of the TNR family who are moving on: Hanna Rosin joins the national staff of *The Washington Post*, whose readers will now enjoy the same bright and forthright style Hanna displayed with us for the last five years as she rose through the ranks from reporter-researcher to senior editor. Also, design consultant Eric Baker, the creative mind behind TNR's cover art for the past half-decade, has decided to pursue other opportunities. Deepest thanks and best wishes to both. Finally, under the heading of pride in vicarious authorship, we offer our congratulations to former reporter-researcher Fareed Zakaria, the managing editor of *Foreign Affairs*, who has just published *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton University Press).

VIRTUAL HOME NEWS: We are also pleased to announce that, as part of a technological upgrade here at TNR, we now have two new Internet mail addresses. Subscription inquiries and changes of address should be sent to: circulation@tnr.com. All other correspondence, including letters to the editor, can be sent to: submissions@tnr.com. •

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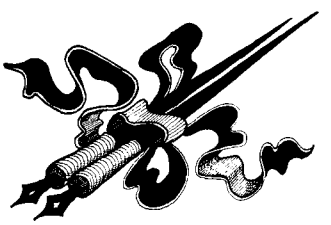
THE HARD QUESTIONS

MY RFK

By Michael J. Sandel

Commentators marking the thirtieth anniversary of Robert F. Kennedy's death have asked whether he could have saved liberalism, and the nation, from Richard Nixon. But the better question is whether RFK could have saved liberalism from itself. For, as Kennedy campaigned for the presidency in 1968, he was finding his way to a political vision that challenged the complacencies of postwar American liberalism. Had he lived, he might have set progressive politics on a new, more successful course—precisely because he was not, by either temperament or ideology, a true liberal.

RFK's political outlook was in some ways more conservative and in other ways more radical than the mainstream of his party. He worried about the remoteness of big government, favored decentralized power, criticized welfare as "our greatest domestic failure," challenged the faith in economic growth as a panacea for social ills, and took a hard line on crime.



Some viewed RFK's departure from liberal orthodoxy as a shrewd attempt to woo white working-class ethnic voters while retaining the support of minorities and the poor. It certainly had that effect. In the 1968 Indiana primary, for example, Kennedy won 86 percent of the black vote—and the counties where George Wallace had fared best in 1964. The journalist Jack Newfield aptly described RFK as the only candidate of protest who "was able to talk to the two polarities of powerlessness at the same time."

But Kennedy's unease with the conventional wisdom of '60s liberalism represented more than calculation. His message resonated because it drew upon a vision of citizenship and community that the managerial politics of the modern age had crowded from view. As he groped to articulate a public philosophy adequate to the turmoil of his times, RFK revived an older, more demanding vision of civic life. According to this ideal, freedom does not simply consist of fair access to the bounty of a consumer society; it also requires that citizens share in self-rule, that they participate in shaping the forces that govern their collective destiny.

The civic strand of Kennedy's politics enabled him to address anxieties of the late '60s that persist today—mistrust of government, a sense of disempowerment, and the fear that the moral fabric of community was unraveling. Liberals often either cast their arguments in individualistic terms or appeal to the ideal of national community. Kennedy, by contrast, emphasized the importance for self-government of those layers of community in between the individual and the nation and lamented the loss of such intermediate structures in the modern world. "Nations or great cities are too huge to provide the values of community," he said. "The world beyond the neighborhood has become more impersonal and abstract.... In far too many places—in pleasant suburbs as well as city streets—the home is a place to sleep and eat and watch television; but the community is not where we live. We live in many places and so we live nowhere."

In addressing the nation's urban ills, Democrats of the '60s emphasized unemployment, while Republicans spoke of crime. Kennedy spoke convincingly about both joblessness and crime, and he linked the issues to broader civic themes. The tragedy of crime, he argued, was not only the danger it posed to life and limb but also its destructive effect on public spaces. "No nation hiding behind locked doors is free," he maintained, "for it is imprisoned by its own fear. No nation whose citizens fear to walk their own streets is healthy, for in isolation lies the poisoning of public participation." Similarly, unemployment posed a civic challenge, not just an economic one. The problem was not simply that the jobless lacked an income but that they could not really be full citizens: "To be without work," Kennedy said, "to be without use to one's fellow citizens, is to be in truth the Invisible Man of whom Ralph Ellison wrote."

Kennedy's clearest difference with mainstream liberal opinion was over welfare. Unlike conservatives, who opposed federal spending for the poor, Kennedy criticized welfare on the grounds that it rendered millions of Americans dependent on handouts and thus unable to play a role in the democracy. "Fellowship, community, shared patriotism—these essential values of our civilization do not come from just buying and consuming goods together. They come from a shared sense of individual independence and personal effort."

Had the Democratic Party of his era taken up RFK's toughness on crime, it would have deprived a generation of Republicans of one of their most effective issues. Had Democrats heeded Kennedy's worries about welfare, they could have reformed it without abandoning the poor, built support for the jobs programs and community development corporations he favored as an alternative, and avoided decades of public resentment toward welfare that fed hostility toward government. Had Democrats learned from RFK the importance of community, self-government, and civic virtue, they would not have ceded these powerful ideals to conservatives like Ronald Reagan, who invoked them rhetorically, while promoting an unfettered capitalism that weakened neighborhoods and communities. Three decades after the death of RFK, the progressive impulse has yet to recover a compelling voice. We still need a strenuous idealism that recalls us to a citizenship that consists of something more than basic training for a consumer society. •

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School choice is constitutional.

VOUCHED FOR

By Eugene Volokh

Last week's decision by the Wisconsin Supreme Court upholding Milwaukee's school voucher plan will hardly be the last judicial word on the subject. Similar cases are pending in Arizona, Maine, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Vermont—and lower courts in Maine, Ohio, and Vermont have come to the opposite conclusion. Voucher programs, those courts have ruled, violate the Constitution's Establishment Clause (the government "shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion") by channeling public money to religious schools. The issue may ultimately reach the Supreme Court, where the outcome is hardly certain.

But, while school choice raises many difficult policy questions, its constitutionality should be clear. The best way to read the Establishment Clause is that it requires neutrality with respect to religion, not exclusion of religion from even-handed government benefits, which is in fact a form of discrimination against religion. We usually take this principle for granted when it comes to such public services as police protection, garbage collection, and the G.I. Bill. After all, we'd be appalled if the fire department refused to take calls from churches on the theory that "There's a wall of separation around your church, and we can't cross it to help you." Government shouldn't give preference to churches, but it shouldn't discriminate against them, either. This is quite consistent with the separation of church and state—government maintains its separation by treating institutions equally, without regard to whether they are secular or religious.

On this logic, religion-neutral school voucher programs would be clearly constitutional. In a program like Milwaukee's, the government writes checks to parents covering the cost of their children's education (up to a limit approximately equal to the state's share of public school expenses). The state sends the checks to the schools, and the parents endorse them over. The decision to respect or recognize a particular religion is the parents' alone. What's unconstitutional about that?

Well, say the critics, the fact that *any* government money ends up at parochial schools means that government is subsidizing religion. "Wisconsin taxpayers will be coerced into supporting religions, including sects and cults, with which they may not agree," says a typical news bulletin from the American Civil Liberties Union. But taxpayer money often flows indirectly into religious institutions with no constitutional problems. No one cares whether government employees or Social Security recipients donate parts of their checks to religious organizations—even those widely perceived as sects or cults. College students can spend G.I. Bill funds or Pell grants or government-subsidized student loans to attend college at Notre Dame or Georgetown, even to study theology. The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously held in the 1986 *Witters* case that a blind student may choose to use state vocational education funds to train for the ministry. The principle is clear: If people individually decide to route their tax-supported paychecks, welfare checks, or scholarships to even pervasively religious institutions, there's no constitutional problem—so long as the government disburses the money without regard to religion.

School choice critics counter that, while the programs look neutral, they really aren't, because most of the funds end up being spent at religious schools. But this is like claiming that putting out a fire at a church is unconstitutional because the firefighters are primarily helping the church. Looking at education or firefighting as a whole, we see the bulk of the money goes to nonreligious institutions. Roughly 90 percent of all schools throughout the country, public or private, are secular. To follow the fire analogy, it's as if the government used to exclude private schools from fire protection but recently switched to a more even-handed approach—which hardly qualifies as expressing a preference for religion.

Could discrimination against religion be a sort of compensation for preferences that the tax system gives to religious institutions? Actually, property-tax exemptions, as well as charitable exemptions from income taxes, fit the neutrality mold. Courts generally uphold them precisely because they apply to all charitable institutions, whether religious or not. Private nonprofit secular schools are just as tax-exempt as private nonprofit religious schools. And parents who send their kids to private religious schools pay taxes just like parents who send their kids to secular schools.

School choice, the president of People for the American Way has opined, would set "Thomas Jefferson and James Madison spinning in their graves." But the constitutional framers' writings on religion were aimed at programs that discriminated in favor of religion. For instance, Madison's "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments" (1786)—often cited by school choice critics—actually referred to a preference scheme called the "Bill Establishing a Provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion," which Madison said "violate[d] that equality which ought to be the basis of every law." It did not suggest that equal treatment without regard to religion was unconstitutional.

What about the risk that government funding would lead to government oversight and regulation, which in turn could impinge upon religious schools' independence? The government already has broad authority to

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regulate private schools, including religious ones. State governments can (and often do) require that all schools comply with health, safety, and anti-discrimination laws, obey minimum curriculum requirements, hire only certified teachers, and so on. Wisconsin could certainly have imposed two of the plan's four requirements for participating schools—compliance with anti-discrimination laws and compliance with health and safety laws—even without vouchers. The same likely goes for the plan's academic performance criteria.

Under the fourth requirement, religious schools that accept vouchers must honor parents' requests to excuse their children from religious activity; unlike the other three rules, this constraint is indeed made possible by the funding. But it's hard to see how the ban on establishment of religion prohibits schools from deciding, on their own, whether to accept such conditions in return for public funds. Yes, the offer of public subsidies may pressure some schools into accepting the conditions. But the non-school-choice regime exerts that kind of pressure, too: Millions of parents are similarly pressured by the offer of free education into sending their kids to government-run schools, even when they'd otherwise prefer a religious education. School choice should, in the aggregate, diminish such secularizing pressure.

The only real constitutional gray area here should be whether neutrality is merely permissible or whether it should be constitutionally compelled. That is, should the courts prohibit government from excluding parochial schools from school choice plans? The Supreme Court's 1978 decision in *McDaniel* v. *Paty*, striking down a law that discriminated against clergy's candidacies for public office, suggests that neutrality is constitutionally required. So does the 1993 *Lukumi Babalu Aye* decision, which held that the government may not disadvantage religiously motivated practices (in that case, animal sacrifice) as compared to identical secular practices.

Likewise, the Supreme Court's free speech cases suggest the government may not discriminate against private religious teaching, and in favor of private secular teaching, even when the discrimination involves distribution of money. The government would still be able to fund only government-run schools and not private schools, because such a distinction would be based on government control, not religiosity. But any voucher programs that help secular private schools would not be allowed to exclude religious private schools.

Of course, this debate will have to wait until the courts decide whether neutrality is even permissible. With any luck, the U.S. Supreme Court will reach precisely that conclusion. The Constitution bars the "establishment of religion," but it's difficult to see how treating everyone the same without regard to religion establishes anything—except, of course, equality.

EUGENE VOLOKH teaches First Amendment law at UCLA Law School.

A really big deal.

GOLDMAN RUSH

By Paul J. Isaac

Gawking and teeth-gnashing greeted the June 15 reports that Goldman, Sachs—the centenarian New York firm widely regarded as one of the world's top three investment banks—had finally decided to go public. The gawking was for the staggering profit Goldman's most senior partners stand to make from the sale of company stock: as much as 100 to 200 million dollars a piece, by some estimates. The gnashing was over the possibility that the plan signaled the firm's belief that there is no better time to sell—which, on Wall Street, can be a polite way of saying that an economic downturn is at hand. (That's especially ironic, given Goldman's boosterish forecasts of a long-term, inflation-free boom in the "new economy.")

But a better explanation for the Goldman announcement is that it marks the end of an old way of doing business rather than the beginning of a new economic era. For years, Goldman held out against the trend in investment banking and refused to go public—even though such a move would tap vast oceans of capital by allowing stockholders a stake in the company. Now that Goldman has finally relented, the firm's famously traditionalist ethos may finally be dead.

The quintessential symbol of Goldman style is the firm's quaint system of partnership itself. The firm pioneered aggressive recruitment of top students from a very limited number of prestigious business schools, and it remains religiously meritocratic on matters of advancement, shedding poor "fits" and lesser lights wholesale. Even partnership doesn't bring a reprieve: Partners must produce, too, which is one reason why so few have lasted much more than a decade before they "went limited," making room for new general partners.

This structure has its drawbacks, of course. In particular, it means Goldman must stay almost absurdly profitable, because once partners retire the firm must pay out the capital balances the retirees accumulated, even as it must simultaneously accumulate sufficient investment capital to keep pace with competitors. But the bargain seemed like a worthy one. Originally, all investment banks were partnerships because it exposed the partners to the firms' financial risks—and thus imposed discipline over them. Virtually alone among the large firms, Goldman has stuck to that model, and that's a big reason it could maintain its reputation for soundness as well as its uniquely stolid character.

For example, while Goldman may have deeper roots

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in the takeover arbitrage business than any other bulge bracket house, it has long been the most adamant about not representing acquirers in hostile deals. Goldman's research has tended to be somewhat "bigger picture" and industry-focused relative to the competition—providing the type of service investment banks were originally set up to supply. Goldman has a reputation for hauteur toward the lesser members of its underwriting syndicates, and not without cause. In a business full of the flashy, the brash, and the brainy, Goldman has earned its reputation for ample self-assurance, high corporate panache, incredible diligence, and well-coordinated reliability. Goldman has rarely been an innovator, but, when the firm enters a new area, it organizes its effort extremely well and rapidly develops outstanding technical competence.

Similarly, in an era of Wall Street free agency, Goldman has shown uncommon restraint, hiring relatively few people into senior positions from outside and tending to promote from within—with devotion to the firm's culture as an important criterion for advancement. And Goldman's pay structure is a throwback, too, for two reasons. First, while today's firms use high compensation packages for nonpartners to lure talent, Goldman still pays partners far more than nonpartners and advances nonpartners in grade with relatively small pay differentials compared to their peers. Second, unlike many Wall Street firms, which have vastly disproportionate ownership interests among the principals, Goldman's partnership is relatively egalitarian: the largest of Goldman's partners reportedly owns only two percent or so of the firm.

So why change course now? First, the firm has become so big that in many ways it's not really a partnership anymore. It's one thing to have a close-knit culture in a firm that has a handful of, or even a few dozen, partners. It's quite another when the most senior partners number over 100—and the firm counts employees by the thousands.

More important, though, the need for capital has become overwhelming in recent decades, and particularly in recent years. Trading inventories have burgeoned. Infrastructure requirements have exploded, requiring exponential increases in the permanent capital firms invest in facilities and equipment. Not long ago an investment banker could operate out of a well-furnished broom closet. Now first-rate firms occupy millions of square feet of high-priced space and require yearly information technology budgets that run into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Investment practices have changed in important ways, too. Historically, securities dealers on Wall Street had to stay very liquid. Depression-era laws required firms to demonstrate that, if necessary, they could sell everything they owned under adverse market conditions in short order and close their doors without making their customers bear any loss. Recently, however, investment banks have sunk much capital into illiquid, principal investments: defaulted mortgages, leveraged buyouts, and ownership of real estate. And creditors have viewed these investments as firm capital.

This practice, known as double leverage, allows firms to invest more aggressively. And on this count, at least, Goldman, Sachs has been no exception. Over the last 15 years or so the firm has participated in something like $13 billion of principal investments in several hundred separate transactions. This is still more conservative than other firms. At Nomura's London office, for example, a small group of employees invested more than half that much in just three years and with just a handful of transactions. Nevertheless, there have been long periods during which much of Goldman's equity was tied up in the sorts of investment that are very hard to sell on short notice.

But this has meant considerably more risk for the firm. (That's the drawback of double leverage.) And, even at an institution as venerable as Goldman, the bearers of that risk—that is, the partners—have reason to be concerned. Goldman has a highly leveraged balance sheet, with about $8 billion in equity capital supporting some $150 billion in aggregate assets. The firm is also no stranger to crisis. The Penn Central bankruptcy in 1970, and the ensuing chaos in the commercial paper market, a traditional Goldman specialty, was a serious jolt to the firm. More recently, overexpansion, a depressed bond market, and the subsequent Mexican peso crisis produced a good scare—in the wake of these events, about two score Goldman partners quickly went limited. (Reportedly, it took extraordinary efforts by the firm to prevent further defections.) At other firms, like Morgan Stanley and Bear, Stearns, the partners decided some time ago not to shoulder these kinds of risks: they shed their partnerships and went public. It's not hard to see why Goldman's partners have come to the same conclusion and are cashing out now.

There will, of course, be some internal fallout from the offering. Although firm officials promise that the distribution of money will be far more egalitarian than similar sales in the past, most of the money will go to the 190 equity partners, with some reserved for a second group of managing directors (sometimes referred to as partners in waiting). Lesser senior employees, many of whom have put in years at Goldman and have eschewed lucrative opportunities elsewhere, probably won't reap much benefit—although they won't exactly suffer, either.

But on the balance sheet, at least, Goldman will almost surely come out ahead. Barring a further market collapse that would greatly diminish the selling price of shares, Goldman's stocks will probably fetch a price that brings in capital equal to more than three times the firm's current equity value—all because investors expect future growth and profit. In effect, Goldman will have created tremendous new wealth where none before existed, which is, after all, what the firm was set up to do.

PAUL J. ISAAC is a portfolio manager in New York.

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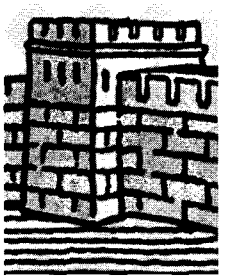
DAY TRIPPER

By Dana Milbank

"We do not ignore the value of symbols," the president said in his speech last week, justifying his plan to visit Tiananmen Square during his China trip. "But, in the end, if the choice is between making a symbolic point and making a real difference, I choose to make the difference." It was a noble sentiment—but an odd one, given Clinton's itinerary in China. The trip, which begins next week, will be a festival of symbolism.

Sure, there may well be some substantive developments during the visit: another Chinese order for Boeing aircraft or the like, another couple of dissidents released, maybe even an agreement not to point nuclear missiles at each other (a measure that *The New York Times*, which first reported the possibility, deemed "symbolic"). But those who crave historic, Nixon-opens-China consequences will probably be disappointed. The eight-day trip is scheduled to include one day of diplomacy and seven days of theater. In fact, one highlight of the China trip may turn out to be the export of the Clinton administration's signature innovation: its event-of-the-day system of government.



Here at home, the Clinton White House has long used the event-of-the-day technique to steer the press, and therefore the national debate, in the direction that most suits the president's needs. Yesterday it was tobacco, today it's health care, tomorrow welfare reform, and so on—each day a different theme, coupled with a staged presidential event, neatly packaged for the evening news. Clinton's events du jour in China will be different (religious freedom one day, environment another, economic cooperation the next), but the technique is the same. The White House even consulted polls of the Chinese public to see how they view America on various issues, and it has been negotiating live TV time with the Chinese to get Clinton's message past the censors. Each day has a theme, many with events synchronized with U.S. media deadlines half a world away. What's more, the White House has discovered that the twelve-hour time difference might allow the president *two* news cycles of publicity in a single day—a first for a foreign trip, White House officials say—giving him the unheard-of luxury of packaging two themes in a day.

The president's critics will claim the trip is another case of Clintonian style over substance, image over reality. But Clinton's politics of appearance may, in this case, serve a useful foreign policy function. The trip's main goal, White House officials say, is to sell the administration's policy of engagement to the American people (and, to a lesser extent, to sell the American way to the Chinese people). This puts Clinton in the peculiar role of cheerleader for the new China. In order to sell his China policy to Americans, he must sell China, itself, to Americans. China has been demonized by both the right and left as a hostile and aggressive power, oppressor of its own people, and the United States' next great enemy. Clinton must repackage China as a complex and diverse land of peaceful people and great economic potential, fixated on its own problems, in need of American cooperation. The trip, therefore, is to be "one vast education experience for the American press," as one National Security Council staffer puts it.

Over eight days, our teacher and guide, Bill, will take us on a journey through China's rich past, its ambiguous present, and (with our help) its peaceful and prosperous future. After an opening ceremony in Xian on Thursday, June 25, Clinton's Friday event of the day, along with a visit to the terra-cotta warriors, will be a roundtable with six to eight ordinary (non-hostile) Chinese citizens affected by change: an educator, a farmer, a hospital worker, an entrepreneur, a local official, and the like. The theme: the grassroots effects of China's economic change.

Saturday is the trip's one policy day, beginning with the Tiananmen Square ceremony, ending with a state dinner, and filled with talks with Jiang and other Chinese officials. Sunday gives the White House a good two-theme day. In the morning, Clinton will attend a Christian church in Beijing and, the White House hopes, speak from the pulpit about religious freedom. In the afternoon, he'll visit the Great Wall and the Forbidden City.

Monday is to be Clinton's biggest event of the trip, a wide-ranging speech to Beijing University students and faculty with a half-hour question-and-answer session to follow. The White House has been plotting with China's state television, CCTV, to cover the event live—beaming Clinton's uncensored remarks to hundreds of millions of Chinese. This is his best chance to echo Reagan's "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall" and Kennedy's "Ich bin ein Berliner" classics, and he may repeat the "wrong side of history" line he used on Jiang last year. The White House has been negotiating some "impromptu" events as well (some press-the-flesh opportunities and other things that might land the president some Chinese air time) but doesn't want the details out in advance, lest the Chinese block such planned spontaneity.

Tuesday and Wednesday will find the president in Shanghai, this time for a roundtable with six to eight Chinese "agents of change"—thinkers, business types, academics. (Theme of the day: progress.) This is the closest Clinton will get to critics of the Chinese regime; he doesn't plan meetings with dissidents, an NSC official says. On Thursday, he'll travel to Guilin, a beautiful

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town in South China, to deliver a speech and, possibly, package it with a boat ride. (Theme: the environment.) On Friday, finally, Clinton will visit a Hong Kong to talk with business and political leaders and to deliver the second major speech of his visit, this one about Hong Kong as a model for Chinese economic development and about the Asian financial crisis. The morning speech and an afternoon press conference will allow Clinton to hit two news cycles. (Theme: capitalism.)

The NSC, which is arranging much of the trip, has been traditionally (sometimes notoriously) apolitical. But it's keeping more of an eye on politics this time. Antony Blinken and David Leavy, who handle strategic planning for the NSC, have worked with White House political hands Rahm Emanuel and Paul Begala, as well as with Communications Director Ann Lewis (who runs the White House's ordinary event-of-the-day operation). The model, officials say, is the Africa trip, in which Clinton tried to replace the American image of Africa as a land of genocide, famine, and Ebola. In addition to the thematic public events in China, the White House has helped arrange supporting events to boost the Chinese image of the U.S. and vice versa. Before he leaves for China, Clinton plans an intimate talk in the West Wing with a few Chinese journalists to "set the table" for the visit and win the Chinese press over with the celebrated Clinton charm. The president also is taping an introduction to an American documentary that will air on Chinese television during the trip. Even if Clinton doesn't get all the Chinese TV time he desires, he can count on reaching a minority of Chinese who get CNN and other networks via satellite—courtesy of some of those American satellites launched so controversially by Chinese rockets.

Perhaps the greatest threat to the Clinton message machine in China will be the Tiananmen Square visit. White House press secretary Mike McCurry has been repeatedly dogged with the question at briefings, and Clinton had to explain himself in his press conference and his speech. The criticism is largely unfair to the president. It's standard protocol observed by other recent visiting heads of state, and the ceremony in question isn't, technically, in the square itself. White House aides discussed the problem, but they concluded there was no reasonable way to avoid the traditional ceremony. "How would you sneak into China through the back door?" asks one NSC aide. "You could meet at an airport hangar, under cover of darkness, with paper bags over your heads." NSC chief Sandy Berger, on an advance trip to China, didn't make the ceremony a priority in his negotiations. Instead, the White House has used the Tiananmen visit as a bargaining chip: It builds up goodwill, so the president can get the prizes he really wants, like Chinese television time. Standing on principle, one of the president's advisers explains, would be a hollow gesture, "like when Santa Monica declares itself a nuclear-free zone."

Not that there's anything wrong with a little symbolism now and then. •

Tibet's unglamorous reality.

HIGH DRAMA

By Maura Moynihan

There was a time when a "benefit" for the Tibet movement meant a dozen true believers gathered in someone's kitchen, sipping supermarket wine out of paper cups and munching saltines, occasionally with cheese. Nowadays high-powered publicists are besieged by requests for access to Tibet events. These have become lavish affairs, complete with champagne in long-stemmed glasses. Society columnists breathlessly pursue party scoops: Naomi Campbell spotted at a Studio 54 event in deep huddle with a Tibetan lama; Brad Pitt, star of one of the three recent Hollywood movies on Tibet, seen backstage at the recent Tibetan Freedom Concert with performers Pearl Jam, R.E.M., and the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Even the J. Peterman catalog has blessed the trend, declaring: "It's official. Crystals are out. Tibetan Buddhism is in."

But, while the media focus on the stars, there's little hard news about conditions inside Tibet, the Himalayan nation that has endured nearly 50 years of military occupation by the People's Republic of China. Tibet the movement is almost eclipsing Tibet the country.

China's military annexation of Tibet began in 1951 and reached a brutal climax in 1959, the second year of Mao's Great Leap Forward. By 1963, 1.2 million Tibetans out of a population of approximately six million had either been killed by the Chinese military or starved to death in labor camps and collective farms. Things improved somewhat during the 1980s, after Mao had been forced to abandon both the Great Leap Forward and the subsequent Cultural Revolution which was especially brutal in Tibet. But China's rule over Tibet has grown increasingly repressive ever since President Clinton delinked trade and human rights from China's Most Favored Nation trading status in May 1994. In August of 1997, Beijing renewed and strengthened martial law in Tibet under the "Strike Hard" campaign, a supposed anti-crime effort that provides a new pretense for arresting "counterrevolutionary" "splittists" of the "Dalai Clique," i.e., anyone who challenges Chinese rule. Surveillance, arbitrary arrest, detention, execution, and torture in Tibet have increased dramatically.

A prominent feature of the Strike Hard campaign is an intensified assault on the Buddhist religion, the traditional foundation of Tibetan civilization. Tibetan monasteries are strictly monitored by re-education teams that inculcate "socialist values." Since 1997, several thousand Tibetan monks and nuns have been

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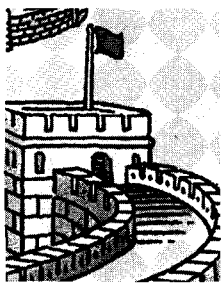
expelled from monasteries, most for refusing to sign a five-point statement denouncing the Dalai Lama. This is part of a ferocious new crusade by China's leaders to vilify the exiled Tibetan leader, whom they call "the head of the serpent" and an "executioner ... with honey on his lips and murder in his heart." Owning the Tibetan flag or a photograph of the Dalai Lama is a punishable offense. The eight-year-old Panchen Lama, Tibet's second-highest Buddhist leader and doubtless the world's youngest political prisoner, has been held in Beijing since 1995.



He is hardly the only child to fall victim to the Chinese regime. A new report by Physicians for Human Rights, based on interviews with recent Tibetan refugees, reported that one-half of torture survivors are under the age of 21, and 15 percent are under the age of 16. Tibetan prisoners are commonly "subject to three or more different forms of torture, including repeated beatings; electric shocks by a cattle prod on the face, arms, and genitals; being suspended in painful positions; witnessing others being tortured; being deprived of food and sleep; [and] having blood drawn against their will." This kind of torture has been routinely used on Tibetan prisoners of conscience for decades, as confirmed by interviews with Tibetan refugees in India and Nepal.

Activists dedicated to improving the situation of these Tibetans have been able to reap some benefits from Americans' surging interest in all things Tibetan. Thanks to the Dalai Lama's relatively new status as an international figure—and to Hollywood films, rock concerts, and benefits—a demonstration at Harvard during Jiang Zemin's November 1997 visit was the school's largest student protest since the Vietnam War. One American diplomat says his Chinese counterpart even told him that China wanted to settle the Tibet issue because "we don't like people making noise in front of our embassies."

But so far popular pressure has had little apparent impact on the Clinton administration. While Clinton agrees to have his picture taken with the Dalai Lama, the State Department continues to support China's claim that Tibet is part of China. During the cold war this policy was a result of the United States' desire to appease China in order to gain its support against the Soviet Union. Today it is the result of administration efforts to "constructively engage" with China, hoping to persuade China to stop helping other nations develop nuclear weapons—and to preserve American companies' access to the Chinese market. Thus, during Clinton's upcoming visit to Beijing, "Tibet's going on the back burner," as one State Department staffer put it.

The United States' indifference toward Tibet represents a serious misreading of Tibet's geopolitical importance. Occupied Tibet comprises approximately one-fourth of China's land mass and has given China, for the first time in its long history, a continuous border with Burma, India, Bhutan, Nepal, and Kashmir. Once Mao consolidated his control over the Tibetan plateau, he promptly invaded India, which resulted in the 1962 Sino-India border war—a contest won by China and bitterly remembered by New Delhi to this day.

If anything, the recent nuclear tests in South Asia that have so preoccupied the Clinton administration have underscored the destabilizing effect that China's invasion of Tibet has had on the region. "Since Tibet was occupied, India and China have the longest disputed border in the world," notes Warren Smith, an expert on Sino-Tibetan relations. "China supplies Pakistan with its nuclear arsenal. The real issue here is India and China, not India and Pakistan."

China's behavior in Tibet also provides a window into the true nature of China's leaders—a window U.S. policymakers are reluctant to look through. "The best way to understand China's present leadership is to study Tibet," says Steve Marshall, another leading student of Sino-Tibetan relations. "Everything they don't want you to know is in full bloom in Tibet—totalitarian rule, nothing approaching a rule of law or an open press. The Chinese leadership allows some openness where they feel no threat whatsoever. In Tibet, access to information is severely restricted because they have a lot to hide."

The excitement surrounding Tibet the movement could at least lead to more widespread awareness of what's happening in Tibet the country. And one hopes that the media's celebrity obsession won't give the Clinton administration an excuse to dismiss the cause. Already I have heard an old Asia hand scoff: "People without children have pets; people without pets have causes."

MAURA MOYNIHAN has worked for many years with Tibetan refugees in India and Nepal.

Chinese dissidents get on the Net.

PROTEST.ORG

By William J. Dobson

In November 1978, thousands of Chinese began flocking to a stretch of wall in the center of Beijing to post essays and poems proclaiming their grievances and calling for new freedoms. Among these was a tract by today's most famous dissident, Wei Jingsheng, in which he called for a democratic China. It proved to be a short spring for freedom. By April, China's leaders had had enough: the essays and poems were torn down from what had by then been dubbed "Democracy Wall." All further postings were banned.

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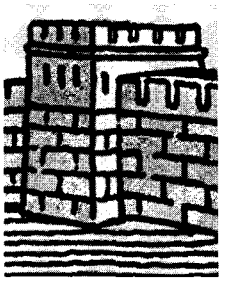
Today, Chinese dissidents are at it again. Defying Beijing's wishes and demands, they are posting calls for democracy that are as sophisticated and provocative as anything published on Democracy Wall. Only this time they've chosen a less vulnerable—and more powerful—venue: the Internet.

Some of the best-crafted works come from *Tunnel* (www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Union/1761/tunnel.html), a Chinese-language journal of dissent. This computerized samizdat debuted on June 4 of last year to commemorate the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, with the declared intention of "break[ing] through the present lock on information and controls on expression." Since then, *Tunnel* has explored such taboo topics as the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and the controversial U.S.-made documentary *Gate of Heavenly Peace*. While *Tunnel* is managed and edited in China, once it is ready to go online it is secretly delivered to the United States and then e-mailed back to China from the anonymous nobody@usa.net. Thus, its staff remains safely hidden in cyberspace, and all of its contributors, both in China and abroad, write under pseudonyms.

Tunnel represents the next plateau in the technological evolution of dissent. Chinese intellectuals and dissidents relied on pen and paper during the 1915 New Culture Movement, turned to printing presses during the Democracy Wall movement, and used faxes and photocopiers during the Tiananmen Square uprising. For the editors of *Tunnel*, the Internet was the next logical step, and perhaps the most ambitious challenge, to Beijing's control of information. "The computer network ... disseminates technology onto the desks of each and every one of us," they explained in their inaugural editorial; "it can undermine the two pillars of an autocratic society—monopoly and suppression."



Tunnel is not alone. The exile government of the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India, uses the Internet to press its case against China's occupation of Tibet. Last month an international group of dissidents called the Digital Freedom Network launched a website that posts banned or censored documents. And Wei Jingsheng, the hero of Democracy Wall, has said that, now that he has been exiled from China, he plans to use the Internet to get his message to those on the other side of the Great Wall.

China's leadership has not been slow to respond to the threat dissidents pose in cyberspace. Last year the government further beefed up an earlier 1996 law restricting access to the Internet. The definition of computer crime has been expanded to include "spreading rumors," "promoting feudal superstitions," and "injuring the reputation of state organs." Beijing mandates that everyone who signs up with an Internet service provider must register with the police and promise not to "commit crimes against the state." Penalties range from confiscation of your computer to imprisonment.

But, if China's rulers fear the cyberthreat, they also appear incapable of effectively countering it. In 1996 China began blocking websites as varied as Human Rights Watch, *The New York Times*, and *Playboy*. Yet somehow, on any given day, it is often possible to gain access to at least a number of these sites from China. And savvy Chinese surfers can slip around electronic barriers by linking up to computers outside the country. Thus, despite the efforts of Chinese authorities, a number of blocked sites, including Human Rights in China and *China News Digest*, report getting dozens to hundreds of hits each week from within China.

And chances are those numbers will keep growing. That's because the only thing authoritarian Asian countries need to fear more than freedom of expression is further economic trouble, and Beijing must surely be aware that the countries that have best weathered the Asian financial crisis have been those with real-time access to news and financial data. And so, at the same time that it tries to limit citizens' access to the Net, Beijing has designated information technology a "national pillar industry" and is spending tens of millions on Internet hubs across the country. According to the Chinese government, during the last five years the number of Chinese citizens who are online has skyrocketed from 20,000 to one million. And it projects that by the end of 1998 the number will be closer to 1.5 million. Internet cafés are springing up all around Beijing. Being wired is becoming as big a status symbol in China as owning a television was in the 1980s.

This has meant big business for the personal-computers market in China, now the second largest in Asia. Whereas in 1991 there were only a few thousand PCs in China, according to Marcia Kunstel and Joseph Albright of the Cox News Service, 4,000 new PCs are now sold every day, half of which are equipped to reach the Internet.

This has also meant big business for Silicon Valley. After meeting with President Jiang Zemin last month, Intel's chairman, Andrew Grove, announced the establishment of the Intel China Research Center. Grove and company believe the $50 million Beijing-based research center will help them keep a competitive edge in China's computer market. The Chinese authorities believe it will help train a generation of homegrown engineers and computer scientists. As for Bill Gates, whom much of China's educated youth considers a demigod, he gets a better reception in China than do most heads of state. Last December, on his fifth trip to China since 1994, thousands of Chinese students came to hear Gates speak about the future of computing in China. At Qinghua University—China's MIT—Gates's autobiography is constantly on loan from the library. And for good reason. Qinghua has graduated many of Microsoft's 330 mainland employees.

So far the Chinese government refuses to recognize the impossibility of encouraging further economic growth while keeping the screws on the free flow of information. While Chinese hard-liners fearful of the West's "spiritual pollution" preach the dangers of cyberspace, a growing faction seems to believe that China can meet the world halfway. They say they dream

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of an "intranet" that would provide access to domestic websites and nothing else. Likewise, a company called China Internet Corp. is trying to build a "China Wide Web," a networking system modeled on the World Wide Web, minus the world. The marketplace of ideas, however, will probably doom both ventures.

The big question is whether dissidents could eventually use the Internet to incite a massive grassroots effort to change China's politics. Perhaps not. But Chinese authorities probably took more than a little notice of the way Indonesian students used the Internet to bolster their calls for Suharto's resignation last month. The students compared notes about protests via e-mail and bombarded journalists with stories of Suharto's corruption. When it was rumored that a prominent Indonesian dissident was to be arrested, the students sent urgent e-mails to U.S. human rights groups, who contacted prominent members of Congress, who put in calls to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Whereas it might usually take a massive letter-writing campaign and weeks of lobbying to reach a senior Cabinet official, the Internet makes it possible before the end of the business day. Whether they realize it or not, Beijing's bureaucrats are going to find it hard to build a fire wall against democracy.

WILLIAM J. DOBSON is an associate editor at *Foreign Affairs*.

It's time to stop fearing China.

BEIJING BULL

By Jacob Heilbrunn

After weeks of being attacked by Congressional Republicans for everything from engaging in "high treason" on behalf of China to planning to appear at Tiananmen Square, President Clinton finally defended himself in a speech before the National Geographic Society. "Choosing isolation" of China "over engagement" of it, the president said, "would make [the world] more dangerous." Yet this caricatures the choices facing the United States. Both the hyperbole of the critics and Clinton's simplistic distinction between engagement and isolation suggest the extent to which the American debate over China policy has become removed from reality.

On one side are the hawks. These include Robert Kagan, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a writer for *The Weekly Standard* (and, occasionally, for TNR), and Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro, authors of *The Coming Conflict With China*. In China, the hawks detect a budding global menace. Bernstein and Munro even see a new cold war in the offing: "Even without actual war, China and the United States will be adversaries in the major global rivalry of the first decades of the century," they write. "Competition between them will force other countries to take sides and will involve all the standard elements of international competition...."

On the other side stand advocates of a new détente—people like Henry Kissinger—who view human rights considerations as a counterproductive intrusion into the conduct of diplomatic relations with another great power. Other détente advocates, such as Robert Bartley of *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page, believe that capitalism will prove to be the solvent for the Beijing dictatorship. The most extreme version of this view has been propounded by Stanford Professor Henry S. Rowen, who predicted in the Fall 1996 *National Interest* that China will become a democracy by 2015—around the time its per capita GDP reaches $7,000.

Both sides are wrong. China is not the Soviet Union redux. No one should expect to see China supporting insurgencies in Central America. But this does not imply that it is a country evolving, slowly but inevitably, into a peaceful, tame democracy. On the contrary, China hopes to gain regional hegemony on its side of the Pacific Rim.

Ironically, it is precisely the limited nature of China's expansionist ambitions that make it slippery for the U.S. to deal with. The Soviet Union, after all, squandered precious resources in Asia, Central America, and Africa. Had the Soviets confined their ambitions to Europe, they might still be a going concern. Similarly, if China were bent on global expansion, it would probably also suffer "imperial overstretch" and implode.

Where does this leave the United States? Though China is unlikely to collapse under the weight of its own excessive ambition, the United States is anything but powerless. Even if Chinese ambitions are largely confined to regional hegemony, the United States is in an excellent position to ensure that they are checked.

Consider the economic sphere. True, China is the world's second-biggest economy—its GDP of $4 trillion is about about half the size of the U.S.'s. China also

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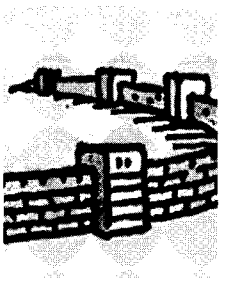
has the advantage of having just absorbed Hong Kong—along with the former British colony's $80 billion in reserves. Furthermore, China's fixed currency is shielded from speculation; most of its foreign debt consists of medium- or long-term loans, which can't be called in overnight. But already China's growth rate is slowing down; the predicted rate for 1998, ranging between four and seven percent, is down from ten. Chinese cities are filled with hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers from the countryside who could explode into social unrest at any time. And, since much foreign investment in China has come from Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Singapore, China is not insulated from the economic shock waves that have hit the region. Thus far, the Chinese government's response has been to announce a massive investment program of $750 billion over the next three years. But Keynesian-style pump-priming could well lead to soaring inflation. In short, there's no guarantee China can escape the economic woes sweeping Asia.

Yet, instead of recognizing this potential pain, the Clinton administration seems to see only gain. "China boasts a growth rate that has averaged ten percent for the past twenty years," Clinton said in his National Geographic Society speech. "Over the next twenty years, it is projected that the developing economies will grow at three times the rate of the already-developed economies. It is manifestly, therefore, in our interest to bring the Chinese people more and more fully into the global trading system to get the benefits and share the responsibilities of emerging economic prosperity." Although China is running a large trade surplus with the United States—over $50 billion per year—the administration acts as though the potential size of the China market justifies catering to the sensitivities of the Beijing elite.



This appears to have been the thinking that prompted the administration to issue the waivers on sensitive satellite technology to Beijing. The approval a year ago of the controversial request of Loral Space and Communications hardly seems to confirm the Republican charge that the administration cut a deal with the Chinese in exchange for campaign contributions. If there is a scandal, it doesn't involve election payoffs; it's that, in granting the approval, the Clinton administration had merely been continuing what had, since the Bush administration, become standard U.S. policy of acceding to Beijing's wishes.

Meanwhile, China continues to upgrade its military. Exploiting peaceful technical assistance from American companies, China has been attempting to improve the accuracy of its ballistic missiles; Walter Pincus reported in the June 13 *Washington Post* that American officials see the Chinese use of American satellite technology as a plus because it allows the U.S. to keep tabs on frequencies and orbits. But, by this logic, the U.S. should be supplying all its enemies, potential or real, with dual-use technology. China has also procured 48 advanced Russian SU-27 jet fighters in order to gain domination over the South China Sea—the crucial waterway for the shipment of oil from the Middle East to Japan and Southeast Asia.

Still, China's efforts at military expansion do not pose a global threat to the U.S. For one thing, China's ability to project its power in the Pacific region remains anemic. In contrast to the $250 billion the U.S. spends annually on defense, China budgets $35 billion—less even than Japan. Much of China's equipment dates from the 1950s and 1960s. It has no aircraft carriers. Its warships lack air-defense and anti-submarine capabilities. Its submarines frequently break down. And its air force cannot refuel planes in midair. A penetrating study of China, "Between Friendship and Rivalry," by Peter W. Rodman of the Nixon Center, concludes that "by almost all serious assessments, the People's Liberation Army remains decades away from constituting a modern all-around force capable of sustained power projection—especially when matched against the more modern and better-equipped capabilities of its neighbors in the region, let alone the United States."

Of course, while China may not be the global menace portrayed by the hawks, it is not toothless either. It has the capacity to undermine U.S. interests. And it frequently does so. For instance, in 1993 China appears to have funneled substantial nuclear know-how to Pakistan—helping to prompt India to carry out nuclear tests. Iraq is also a notable instance of Chinese intransigence toward the United States. Like Russia and France, China used its U.N. Security Council veto to stymie decisive action by the United States against Baghdad in February.

The Clinton administration's response? It has tried to win over the regime with lucrative economic arrangements—and by downplaying human rights violations (which the administration argues will end once China becomes fully capitalist). But it doesn't seem to be working out that way. China continues to challenge U.S. foreign policy. China may have "announced its intention to sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," as Clinton proudly announced in his June 11 speech, and President Jiang Zemin may have "received a delegation of prominent American religious leaders and invited them to visit Tibet." But these measures are window dressing. Indeed, earlier this year, the State Department's own report on human rights stated that "all public dissent against the party and government was effectively silenced by intimidation, exile, the imposition of prison terms, administrative detention, or house arrest."

If the goal is to force China to be more cooperative, instead of "constructive engagement" at the cost of freedom for China's people, we should make human rights a priority issue. That's because human rights is the Chinese regime's weak spot. Now that the Chinese government has dropped its claim to represent a

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morally superior version of communism, the only way it can justify its grip on political power is by providing material goods. So the regime has staked its legitimacy on economic prosperity—an inherently unstable arrangement. The vitality of democracies such as the United States rests on the fact that they command a legitimacy apart from economic performance; depressions, even recessions, may cause citizens to question, denounce the political system but not overthrow it. The recent example of Indonesia surely demonstrates the brittleness of those dictatorships that put economic performance ahead of political liberties. In an economic crisis, such governments have no reservoir of legitimacy upon which to draw.

By keeping the spotlight on China's human rights abuses, the U.S. could help underscore the fragility of the government's legitimacy. That, in turn, would help keep the Chinese honest on all the other security questions that trouble the relationship. The U.S. has everything to gain by pursuing such a policy. After all, China needs the U.S. far more than the U.S. needs China. That is the lesson President Clinton should recall when he visits the square where the brave students fashioned a replica of the Statue of Liberty in 1989. •

The impeachment wild card.

BARNEY RUMBLES

By David Grann

In the basement of the White House, in a small communications room where almost any bad news can be spun into good news, things are not going particularly well on this Wednesday morning. In the last 48 hours, Monica Lewinsky has dumped her pro-Clinton lawyer, an appeals court has forced a key White House adviser to testify before the grand jury, and Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr has for the first time hinted publicly that he might do what Democrats have feared all along: present a report to Congress recommending impeachment.

Yet, sitting behind her desk, not far from where the press is already setting up the morning cameras, Ann Lewis, the president's chief damage-controller, finds two sources of comfort: first, the low probability that Starr will actually have evidence to make his case stick and, second, the high probability that, even if a report does reach the House of Representatives, there is always, as she puts it, "Barney."

Barney, of course, is Barney Frank, the famously cranky liberal from Massachusetts who often roams the House floor mugging Republicans with his verbal assaults. (After one such beating, Newt Gingrich cried out, "Barney Frank hates me.") Repeatedly voted by Hill staffers the smartest and wittiest member of Congress, Frank is the second-ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, where any impeachment proceeding would take place. He is also Ann Lewis's younger brother. "Just knowing he is there is a comfort," she says.

Not only to her. White House aides believe Frank would be the perfect de facto defense attorney in the case of impeachment, and not merely because of his rhetorical skills. After all, says one Democratic aide, "How can he betray his sister?" And, perhaps most importantly, Frank is also the conscience of his own caucus. Where he goes, say Democrats, so go most of his liberal colleagues. "He is key to what happens," says Bill Delahunt, who sits on the Judiciary Committee and once shared an unkempt office with Frank in the Massachusetts State House.

To the administration's delight, Frank is already sticking it to Republicans. At a hearing last March, he attacked the ordinarily irreproachable Judiciary chairman, Henry Hyde, for just doing his job: preparing for an impeachment inquiry. After discovering that Hyde planned to increase the committee's budget by over $1 million to hire more investigators, Frank accused the Illinois Republican of acting covertly and high-handedly. "It simply is inappropriate for them to be playing with this money," he told reporters. After Hyde gaveled the hearing to a close, Frank headed to the House floor, where he continued to berate the 74-year-old chairman before a crowd of tourists in the gallery above. Back in his office, aides say, Hyde had to be restrained from rushing to the chamber.

Most Republicans think things will only get worse. "So far, I haven't seen any signs that he won't just be partisan," says Georgia Republican Bob Barr, a leading impeachment agitator. In his political fantasy, *The Impeachment of William Jefferson Clinton*, R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr., editor-in-chief of *The American Spectator*, portrays Frank as an out-of-control, obstreperous Clintonite. In one

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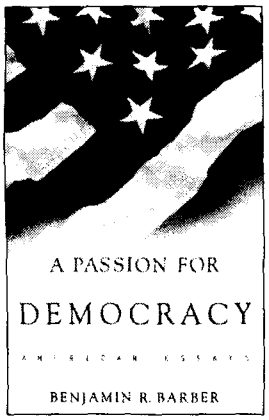

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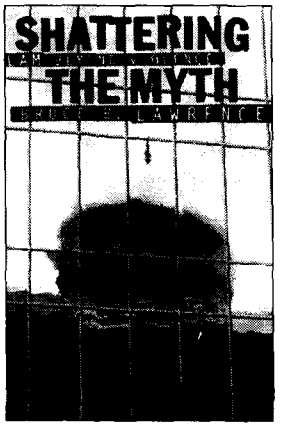

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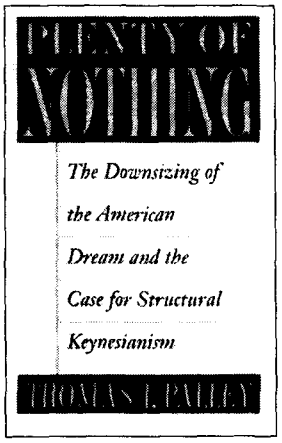

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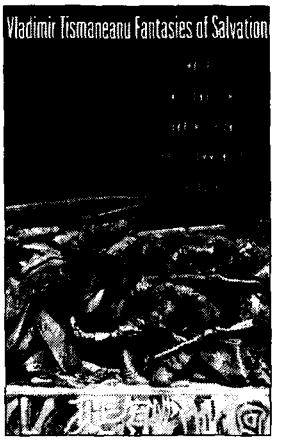

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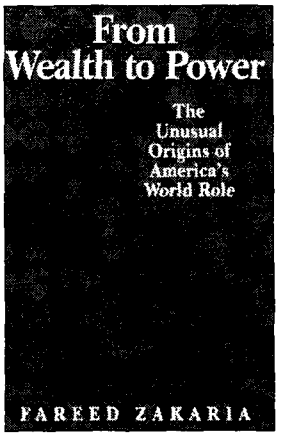

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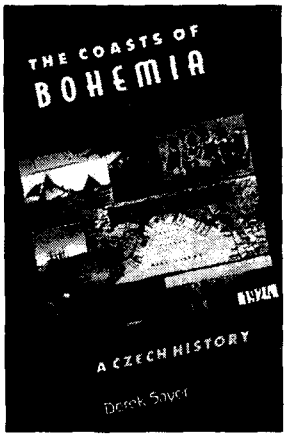

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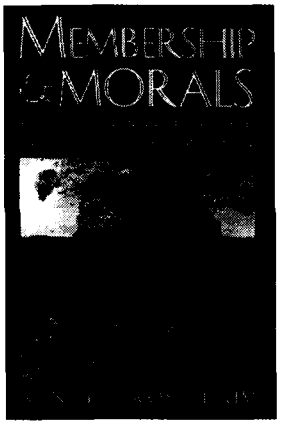

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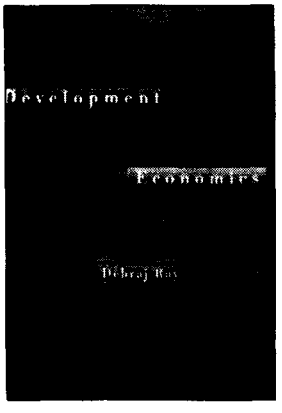

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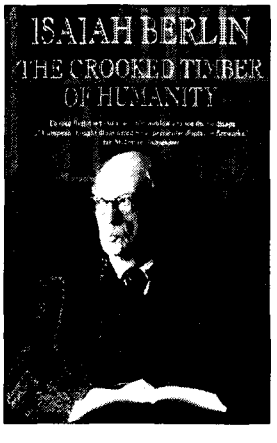

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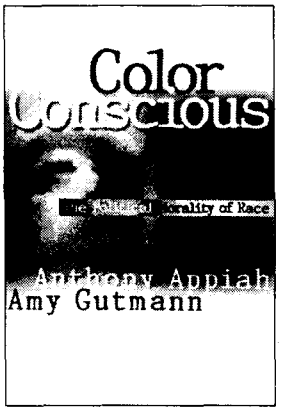

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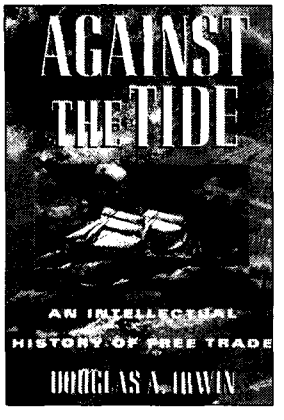

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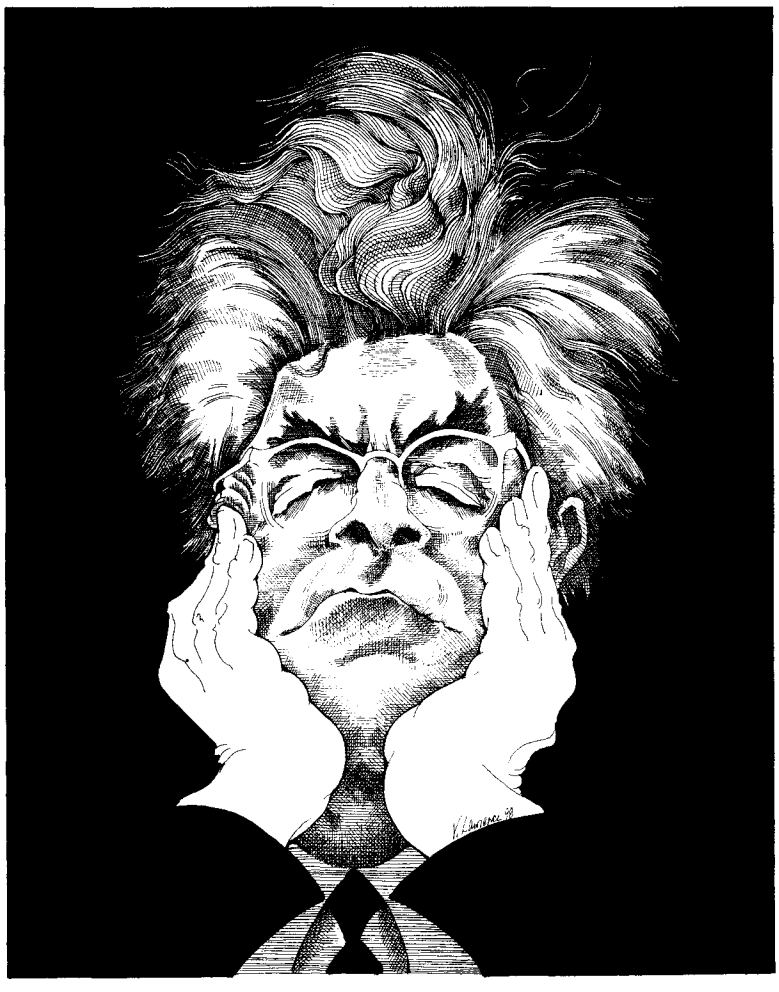
passage, Frank snaps at Hyde, "If I didn't know better, I'd swear we'd been caught in a time warp, a throwback to the 1950s, when humiliating a witness for asserting his constitutional rights was commonplace. There's a word for this kind of thing.... The word is McCarthyism."

This script, however, assumes that Frank's professional and personal loyalties will keep him in line no matter how damning the evidence. But Frank's chief loyalty has always been to his political cause, not necessarily the president, or even his sister. And there is, as he all but concedes, another possible denouement: He turns on both.

Of course, Frank has always been an unlikely savior. "I'm a gay, left-handed Jew," he says, poking at his honey dew melon in the House dining room. The House majority leader, Dick Armey, a big man from Texas with snakeskin boots, once referred to him as "Barney Fag"—which Armey insisted was a slip of the tongue.

Frank was used to such slights: growing up in a largely Catholic neighborhood in northern New Jersey, he was not only a Jew but a pudgy one who spoke with a lisp. Despite years of reciting poetry aloud with his sister in elocution classes, he still talked with a slurred Jersey accent, which sometimes made him unintelligible even to his friends. "He was a little awkward as a boy," recalls his mother, Elsie.



BARNEY FRANK BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Frank had other reasons to be self-conscious. His late father, Sam, ran a truck stop not far from the Holland Tunnel, where Barney pumped gas during the summer. Soft-spoken and sweet, Sam Frank was thrown in jail for contempt after refusing to testify against a brother who had been accused of bribing a city official. Every few days for the next year, Elsie Frank took Ann and Barney to see their dad behind bars. And, for the rest of Sam's life, Barney told *GQ* magazine, his father had "a morbid fear" that his children would be ashamed of him—a high school dropout who landed in prison.

So Barney, like many kids, became everything his father was not: tough, Harvard-educated, acerbic, even a bully. He willed himself into a kind of intellectual boxer, punching people with his verbal jabs and dodging theirs with his wit. In 1976, when he ran for the state house, he explained away his rumpled clothing and Coke-bottle glasses by distributing posters of himself under the slogan: "Neatness Isn't Everything." Two decades later, when Republicans recaptured the majority, he was one of the few Democrats who relished the fight. On the first day of the 104th Congress—a day in which Republicans had vowed to pass an entire package of House reforms—Frank emerged from the cloakroom after the clock struck midnight and shouted: "Parliamentary inquiry. Will the speaker tell me if it's his ruling that it is still Wednesday? I just want to know what day this is because I was told we have to do all this on the first day."

Once, after Frank articulated his reasons for opposing the introduction of a Republican amendment on racketeering, its author, Tom Coburn of Oklahoma, rescinded it. Another time, when GOP House Whip Tom DeLay interrupted Frank on the House floor to voice his agreement with "the gentleman from Massachusetts," Frank shot back: "Let me just say to my friend, he should only interrupt me when he disagrees with me. He need not interrupt me when he agrees with me. He should just nod his head, and we will all notice that."

The gay, left-handed Jew, it turned out, could be merciless. And not just to Republicans. Frank has been known to berate aides, lobbyists, and even constituents if they dawdle, dither, or delay. And, to the White House's envy, he doesn't spin the press—he scares them. "You're full of crap," he'll say to reporters, puffing on his cigar. Or: "You already asked me that twice. If you want to ask it again, ask somebody else." Last month, during an interview on the Fox News Channel, Frank took on Barr and one of the conservative panelists, then turned on the host, Tony Snow. "Excuse me," demanded Frank, after being

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interrupted. "What's the rule here? If you ask me a question, you don't like the answer, I don't get to give it?" Snow tried to fight back: "Mr. Frank, I'll tell you what, if you want to be rude during the interview, you can do it. We're simply trying to get the answer and were not butting in on you." But it was only a matter of time before Snow did what Frank's sparring partners usually do: back down. "Please continue," he said. "You have the floor."

What Frank also has—and what White House allies think will make him an even more sympathetic point man—is his own sex scandal. It began in 1985 when the then-45-year-old, graying congressman responded to a classified in the local gay weekly: "Exceptionally good-looking, personable, muscular athlete is available. Hot bottom plus large endowment equals a good time." Frank met the ad's author, Stephen Gobie, a 28-year-old hustler who had been convicted of drug possession and oral sodomy, for the first time on April Fool's Day. The sex cost $80. After several more encounters, the congressman offered Gobie a job cleaning his Capitol Hill apartment and chauffeuring him to the airport. Frank thought he was turning Gobie into a new person; Gobie, for his part, was turning Frank's pad into a house of prostitution.

Long after the affair ended, the details of the relationship seeped out in the press, putting Frank through the one experience he had always tried to fend off: humiliation. The full House voted to reprimand the man Tip O'Neil had predicted would be the first Jewish speaker in history, while his old ally, *The Boston Globe*, demanded his resignation. But, in the end, Frank held a press conference, answering every salacious question. Buoyed by his sister Ann's support, he explained that, though he had made "stupid" mistakes, he was unaware of the criminal activity—a fact that the Ethics Committee eventually confirmed. His constituents responded by returning him to Congress with over 65 percent of the vote.

Now, with Starr's investigation nearing its end, Frank's allies say he is ever-mindful of his own past. During a recent Judiciary hearing on alleged White House campaign finance abuses, Frank observed: "Maybe I am a little more sensitive to this than some others. I have myself been the target of accusations, including of criminal behavior.... I would think any of us who have been the target of unfounded accusations would react very negatively to the notion that you prosecute by poll."

But such sentiments might not carry over to impeachment hearings. For one thing, Frank survived his scandal because he openly confronted the charges, in stark contrast to the White House's obfuscations of recent months. More important, though, Frank has never been loyal to the chief executive personally, or blindly. Unlike his sister, a feminist who has been publicly criticized for putting her loyalty to her boss ahead of her loyalty to her principles, Frank says he is purely an "ideological partisan."

Of course, many people wonder why someone as notoriously liberal as Barney Frank has stood by someone as notoriously Clintonian as Bill Clinton at all. "I can't understand why Barney carries water for Bill Clinton," says Jerome Grossman, a longtime liberal activist and Frank supporter. "At least Ann Lewis is doing what she's paid for." But, in fact, Frank was never a 1960s-style radical. He is a 1950s, blue-collar liberal who advocated a more pragmatic brand of liberalism long before Clinton arrived in Washington. "The insistence that Democratic presidential candidates continually reassure liberals of their purity is a major cause for the decline of our appeal to the swing voters," Frank wrote in his 1992 book, *Speaking Frankly*. He has defended Clinton because Clinton has defended the Democratic cause from what Jesse Jackson, for whom his sister once worked, never could. "Bill Clinton has performed an enormously important goal," Frank explains today. "He removed the partly justified, partly unjustified rap that Democrats were soft on crime and unpatriotic."

With Clinton a lame duck—and maybe a sitting duck, too—Frank is remarkably candid about his view of the president's diminishing importance. "He was an essentially transitional figure," says Frank, speaking in the past tense. "At this point, Bill Clinton is history from my standpoint, literally and figuratively." For the first time in years, Clinton needs Frank and his allies in the liberal caucus more than they need Clinton. A few days after the scandal broke, when a public backlash against Clinton seemed likely, one of Frank's liberal colleagues on the Judiciary Committee told me: "The last thing Democrats should do is what Republicans did during Watergate: defend the president until we all go down with him."

Even before Clinton became history in Frank's eyes, Frank was willing to confront him. In the summer of 1996, after Clinton signed a welfare law Frank deemed excessively harsh, Frank told *USA Today* that the president had "traded the poor people for two more points in the polls." Last year, after the president signed a bill slashing more social programs, Frank complained: "We addressed a letter to the Democratic president of the United States, and it came back 'addressee unknown.'" Frank has even attacked Clinton on the scandal front: In 1996, he led the fight to reimburse the "innocent people" whom the Clintons had fired in Travelgate. More telling, though, was his recent decision to vote "present"—rather than "nay"—on a Republican resolution demanding the president cooperate further with investigators. "Frank is a defiant Democrat," says George Stephanopoulos. "He'll fight as hard as he can, [but] only as long as he is consistent with the facts." And as long as the facts do not bring down the party. "From the White House point of view, he's the perfect person if they're right," says a Democratic aide on Judiciary who is close to Frank. "But, if there's something there more than sex, he may turn out to be their worst nightmare." His sister's, too. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Classics and Confrontations

Balzac doesn't often turn up as a source of films—the last time was the sinewy *Colonel Chabert* in 1994—but here are two Balzac adaptations in one week, one made from a story, the other from a novel.

The first, and by far the better, is **Passion in the Desert** (Fine Line), from Balzac's story of a Napoleonic soldier who gets lost in the Egyptian desert and encounters a panther. A female. Instead of attacking him, the panther behaves as if the soldier had come as a companion, and the soldier responds in kind. Through the weeks their lives join, and the situation becomes near-erotic. At the last, for ample reason, the soldier is forced to kill the panther, which affects him almost as if he had killed a lover.

It's a strange and strangely sensual story. Given the inherent difficulties of filming it, Lavinia Currier, the adapter and director, has caught a great deal of its heat and glide. We grow a bit impatient with the prelude that she has tacked on, some scenes with the soldier and an artist whom he is escorting (Michel Piccoli, wasted)—all of it patent padding to make a picture of feature length. Once Currier gets to the story proper, we marvel doubly: at the way she has evoked the atmosphere and by the fact that she was able to do it at all.

For the panther, she has substituted a leopard, because she found two leopards that had been raised from birth for "handling." For the Sahara she substituted the Jordanian desert, so we have a chance to see Petra, and the "rose-red city half as old as time" has never looked lovelier. Currier has added a few elements to the story. Augustin, as the soldier is called here, and the leopard share the kill after a hunt. Another leopard, presumably male though this is unspecified, is around for a time to disport with the female and make Augustin jealous.

The fact that this synopsis sounds faintly ridiculous is all the more credit to Balzac's genius and Currier's understanding. The control with which the film slips from Augustin's initial fright to bemusement to companionship to the musk of eros, without anything explicit, embodies in three dimensions what Balzac put on paper.

We keep wondering how it was done, how the actor, Ben Daniels, managed the rolling with the leopard and the mutual rubbings. There was a trainer on hand, we learn in the press notes, which we would have expected but which doesn't explain the intimacies. The very existence of the film supports, in an odd way, the "passion" in Balzac's story.

Inordinately helpful is the glowing cinematography of Alexei Rodionov, the Russian who shot *Orlando*. Here he gives us the most seductive and overwhelming visions of the desert since F.A. Young's in *Lawrence of Arabia*. Balzac's famous last line about the desert: "It is God without mankind." Apparently Rodionov had it in mind.

Cousin Bette (Fox Searchlight), however, is a series of disasters. The first disaster was to choose this novel for filming—which is probably true of almost any Balzac novel. Lots of long novels have been adequately adapted, but the quintessence of a Balzac novel is its teeming, its overflow, its tumult. The whole being of such a novel fights the relative concentration of film. Balzac might be adapted for a TV series, as *Cousin Bette* was in the 1970s (unseen by me), but as a unitary work, the result is likely to be a set of illustrations for some episodes in the book. Which is what happened here, and not skillfully.

The screenplay by Lynn Siefert and Susan Tarr merely crops the book. Cumulation and clarity are lost. Balzac's central idea, the revenge of an unattractive spinster on all the lives she can touch, is further crimped by the casting. Bette is Jessica Lange who, deprived of modern small-scale mimesis, is utterly lost. Hugh Laurie as the spendthrift Hector is a mobile vacancy. Elisabeth Shue as the scandalous music-hall star is an undergraduate in the varsity show who has a chance to play a naughty woman in costume. Aden Young as the sculptor Wenceslas has some touch of the ridiculously romantic, but Bob Hoskins as the parvenu Crevel is just Hoskins in costume, uneasy with the dialogue. (Karl Marx, a Balzac devotee, said in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* that Crevel is "the thoroughly dissolute Parisian philistine." Not this time.)

The director is Des McAnuff, well-known in the theater, making his feature-length debut. Nothing in his work here rises above the ordinary. What is most

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Beyond Silence. *A normal child has two deaf parents. The linkages and schisms that this fact creates are the stuff of a delicately acted German drama. (Reviewed 6/22/98)*
Bulworth. *A senator running for reelection suddenly starts speaking truths about race. Funny, sharp, pyrotechnical. Warren Beatty cowrote, directed and stars. (6/8/98)*
The Horse Whisperer. *Robert Redford directed and stars. A pleasant, if predictable tale, about how a Montana rancher restores the spirits of a damaged child and her horse. Montana is magnificent. (6/15/98)* **The Truman Show.** *A bitter fantasy about a man whose entire life is, unknown to him, on TV. The plot is flawed, but the punch is strong. Jim Carrey is, for once, tolerable. (6/29/98)*—**SK**

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shocking is his ineffectiveness with the actors.

It's inspiriting to note the arrival of the ninth annual Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. (A long title, but worth every word.) This year it includes 33 films from 19 countries. The festival opened in New York and will be seen in Los Angeles, Portland (Oregon), Austin, and St. Louis, among other places, before it goes abroad.

I have seen three of the films, each of them admirably made. **Coming Out**, from Germany, is a fictional work about a bisexual male who marries and whose homosexual element inevitably leads to trouble. The theme is familiar by now, but the direction by Heiner Carow is taut and astringent, and all the performances are finely tuned.

Two documentaries are extraordinary. **Gerrie and Louise**, made in South Africa by the Canadian Sturla Gunnarsson, focuses on a former colonel in the South African Defense Force and a liberal journalist who, after the end of apartheid, fell in love and joined together.

Gerrie talks candidly to the camera about the torture of prisoners that he once did and how he actually came to enjoy it. Louise gives her reasons for accepting him, post-apartheid. Part of his attraction for her is the fact that he has changed—without being remorseful-to-order. Other interviews fascinate, especially those with a former black activist and a former police officer who now works for him. The whole is one more gripping account of a journey through delusion to enlightenment.

Beyond Barbed Wire, by two Americans, Terri DeBono and Steve Rosen, is deeply moving—somewhat shamingly so. It deals with a regiment of Japanese-American soldiers in the U.S. Army in World War II. Many of the members of this regiment came from Hawaii, and some of them had parents in the West Coast internment camps for Japanese. This regiment was sent to Italy and, in the course of the battles northward into France, suffered huge casualties. (The regiment received more decorations than any other unit in the war.)

Some Japanese-Americans were used in the Military Intelligence Service in the Pacific, to interrogate prisoners; but the film concentrates on the fighters in Europe. Intertwined with newsreel clips are interviews with survivors, all elderly of course in 1997 when this picture was made, along with some of their children and grandchildren. Some of the latter are more bitter about the way their fathers and grandfathers were used than are the veterans themselves. What astonishes a contemporary is how little I can recall in the press about these soldiers at the time.

"Festival" may seem an odd term for a collection treating the problems of the inhabitants of our planet. But, in any case, this collection celebrates the fact that filmmakers are looking at the planet more thoroughly and seriously than most of our usual film fare would suggest. •

Almost Justice

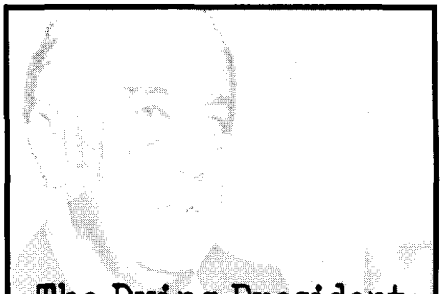
By David Rieff

To End A War
by Richard Holbrooke

(Random House, 408 pp., $27.95)

I.

"Diplomacy is what you do with the dog while you're looking for a rock." Throughout most of the Bosnian war, this jaundiced old State Department saying nicely epitomized the predicament in which the best of the international negotiators found themselves. (About the worst of them, particularly at the most senior levels of the French and British governments and the United Nations Secretariat, who, sometimes publicly, sometimes stealthily, did whatever they could to ensure either a Serb victory or a Bosnian surrender, enough ill can never be said; but that is another, related subject.) Had people not been killed, not been maimed, or not been made refugees by the hundreds of thousands, the diplomatic counterpoint to the slaughter would have been almost funny. The spectacle of the League of Nations failing to deal with the Abyssinian crisis, or the international sanctions committee headed by Lord Plymouth balancing



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the claims of the Spanish Republic and those bent on destroying it, must have had something of the same surreal quality.

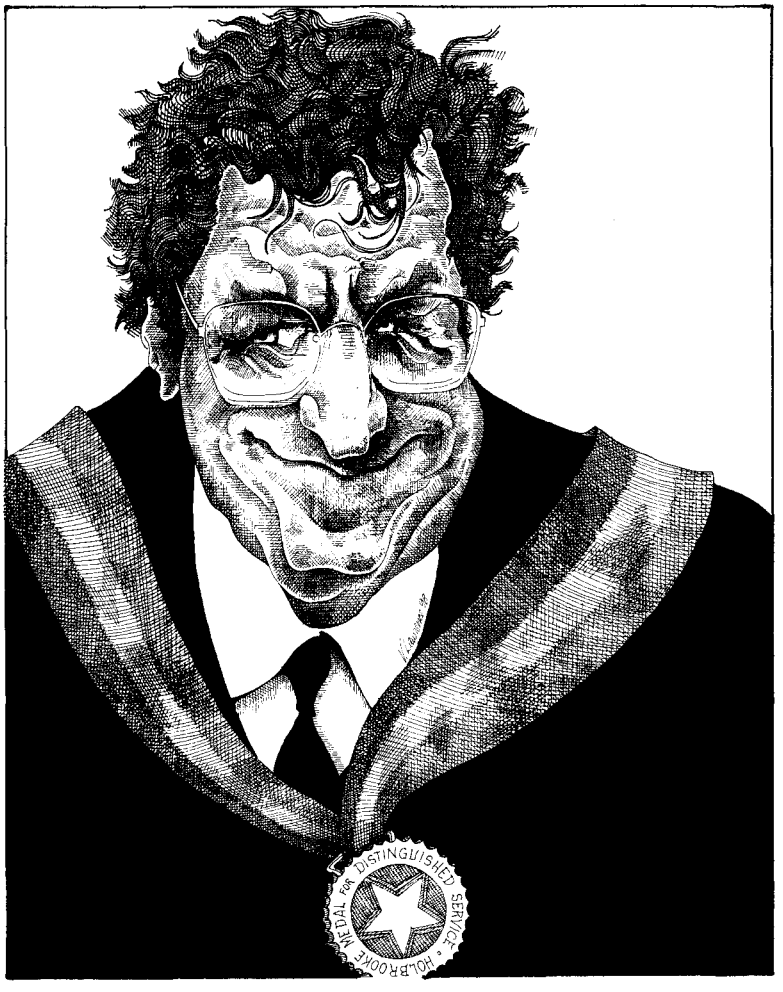
As in the 1930s, the international negotiators in Europe in the early 1990s accomplished very little or made matters worse. All the while, they rejected every ascription of blame. The Secretary-General of the United Nations compared himself to a doctor who could not be held liable if the patient refused to follow his prescription. David Owen, with Cyrus Vance the co-chairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, compared himself in his memoirs to Odysseus. And Kofi Annan, who before he succeeded Boutros-Ghali as Secretary-General was head of the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations and thus had principal day-to-day oversight over Bosnia at the UN, has always insisted that within the terms of its mandate UNPROFOR, the operation that he ran in Bosnia, was a success.

This is a lie, though it is only one of the many lies that the diplomats and the negotiators told the world and themselves. As Owen stated matter-of-factly in *Balkan Odyssey*, Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb military commander, "knew that UN troops were his ultimate safeguard against NATO air power tilting the balance against him." Providing cover for the Serbs lay at the heart of the UN's disgraceful failure in Bosnia. No amount of attempting to slough off the blame onto the permanent members of the Security Council will ever expunge that failure.

Yet the UN was not alone in its culpability. The positions of the great European powers, too, of the British, the French, and the Germans, probably would have been enough to doom Bosnia. The British took the position, as they had done so often when faced with an international crisis that had an element of ethnic conflict, that the only answer was partition. And at least until François Mitterrand left office, the French were actively pro-Serb. The Germans, for their part, having secured the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, promptly withdrew from any serious diplomatic involvement. It was that abdication, and not their decision to recognize Croatia, that was their gravest mistake. Six months into the Croatian war, it was entirely reasonable to recognize the end of a Yugoslavia that had already melted away in blood and fire. But what justification was there for leaving the Bosnians to the fate that recognition had made all but inevitable?

On their own, then, the Europeans made a hash of things. In the early stages of the Yugoslav collapse, Jacques Poos, the foreign minister of Luxembourg, speaking in the name of the European Union, boasted that it was "the hour of Europe." He insisted that the Americans were not needed. And the Bush administration, whose senior foreign policy advisers were almost unanimous in not wanting to get heavily involved diplomatically, not to mention militarily, in undoing Slobodan Milosevic's efforts to create a Greater Serbia out of the corpse of Yugoslavia, seized on the opportunity that the Europeans had so thoughtfully provided.

During the Bush administration, there was never any doubt about American policy toward the former Yugoslavia. For all its good-old-boy callousness, the remark widely attributed to Secretary of State James Baker that the United States "didn't have a dog in that fight" at least imparted no false hopes to the embattled Bosnians. But false hope, in matters both foreign and domestic, has been the Clinton administration's stock in trade. In the campaign of 1992, the governor of Arkansas, thinking that he could embarrass the incumbent president, proclaimed that a Clinton administration would act to end the killing. America, he intoned, would not be party to an agreement that rewarded ethnic cleansing by supporting any partition plan that seemed to ratify Serb gains.



RICHARD HOLBROOKE BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

What fine words they were. They were immediately betrayed. In 1993 and most of 1994, American policy toward Bosnia embodied the worst features of Wilsonianism *and* realism. It amounted to little more than criticizing the conduct of the UN peacekeeping effort and stymieing the various peace-plans that Vance and Owen, and later the Norwegian politician Thorvald Stoltenberg, were proposing as unfair to the Bosnians. This insistence that Serb aggression must not be rewarded was the right and moral position to take, of course, provided that the United States was willing to commit its own troops (unilaterally or as part of a multilateral intervention force or as UN peacekeepers), or at least to lead a serious diplomatic effort to bring the Serbs to heel. But it was willing to do none of these things.

In his memoirs, Dick Morris relates that Clinton was resentful of all the television coverage of Bosnia. "They keep trying to force me to get America into a war," Morris reports that the shallow president said. What the Clinton administration did do, during its first year and a half in office, was block or undermine the various soft partition plans of the international mediators, make a mockery of the UN arms embargo against the former Yugoslavia without actually providing the Bosnians

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with enough weapons to defend themselves, and thwart the plan (largely devised by then-Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole and his skilled foreign policy advisor Mira Baratta) that would have had Washington unilaterally lift the UN-imposed arms embargo and furnish the Bosnians with the means to fire back. Still, the indifferent Clinton and his hard-hearted crew never resisted the opportunity to strike a moralistic pose. What finally provoked the Clinton administration to get involved in Bosnia was, naturally, domestic politics—and the sudden, last-minute discovery of a technicality in the American military commitment to NATO, which Richard Holbrooke's book reveals without sufficient embarrassment for his Commander-in-Chief.

Without a Bosnian surrender, which was the real goal of European and UN policy, or without sustained American involvement, it was probably inevitable that the diplomatic effort would be one of unmatched futility. Deprived of American backing, and of the ability to brandish credibly the eventual deployment of American power, the diplomats could only cajole. At the beginning, they could threaten that the patience of the international community would run out; but the Serbs soon learned that it was safe to discount that threadbare possibility. They could negotiate over plans such as Vance-Owen knowing full well that they had no chance whatever of being implemented.

The Serb nationalist professor Mihajlo Markovic, a former confidant of Slobodan Milosevic, told me in Belgrade in 1994 that when he had entreated the Serb leader not to accept Vance-Owen, Milosevic had laughed. "He said there was nothing to worry about, that it would never get off the ground." Everyone knew that there was no will in Washington, Paris, London, Bonn, or Brussels to provide the soldiers or the money to implement a peace. As Herbert Okun, Vance's deputy at the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, was fond of saying, "diplomacy without the threat of force is like baseball without a bat."

To be sure, hopes for a settlement lingered on, like a patient on life support. After all, not even the British and the French actually wanted the slaughter to continue. It was just that they preferred the status quo—that is to say, a war confined to the Serb-occupied areas of Croatia and to Bosnia—to any outcome that would have required them to act. The UN Secretariat was moved (or not moved) by two other considerations. The first consideration was prudential. Military action against the Serbs would have put UN peacekeepers and humanitarian aid personnel at risk. The second consideration was ideological. As an institution, the UN Secretariat remains wedded, if not to outright pacifism, then at least to the view that force should be avoided at almost any cost. If these impediments were not enough, influential officials in the American government, notably Strobe Talbott, worried that a stronger policy on Bosnia would imperil the Yeltsin government in Moscow, and the leaders of the American military remained unalterably opposed to any deployment. It was the golden age of the Powell Doctrine.

So the diplomats talked and talked and talked and went away empty-handed. Meanwhile the Bosanska Krajina, where Muslims had lived for nearly half a millennium, was cleansed of Muslims, and East Mostar was reduced to rubble, and the siege of Sarajevo went on and on. It is not that there is anything wrong with talking. "Jaw-jaw," Churchill said famously, "is better than war-war." But Churchill did not mean endlessly and no matter what the result. For it was all this jaw-jawing—and the UN's "peacekeeping" deployment, whose mandate was not to end the fighting but to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of the fighting—that gave the Serbs (and later the Croats) the time that they needed to achieve their war aims. Milosevic in Belgrade and Tudjman in Zagreb, like the hard men who did their bidding in the fields and the hills of Bosnia-Herzegovina, soon understood that they could go on pursuing the goal of Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia while making the international negotiators welcome. They had mastered the art of jaw-jaw, war-war. Owen wrote of Mladic that "he had very little wishful thinking in his strategic analysis" and "he was contemptuous about the pusillanimous behaviour of the Western democracies."

Thus the worst fighting to take place in Europe in half a century was dealt with by a group of people who never seemed to get over their surprise that a war was taking place at all. And when at last the full extent of the bad news began to seep in, they seemed to move effortlessly from purblind optimism to dangerous defeatism. Small wonder, then, that the negotiations were a disaster. Even the way they were conducted was a farce. The ludicrousness of the exercise was never more plain than on the day in Sarajevo in 1993 when, at the exact moment that UN briefers were announcing a new cease-fire agreement with the Serbs, the shelling of the city started, and concussions from exploding ordnance knocked the journalists and the briefers to the ground at UN headquarters in the Bosnian capital.

At least senior civilian UN officials were intermittently present on the ground. For the most part, the diplomats from the United States, the European Union countries, and the Russian Federation rarely ventured into the field; and when the diplomatic caravanserai actually found its way to the field, this meant setting up in the superb Esplanade Hotel in Zagreb or the luxurious and somewhat sinister Hyatt Regency in Belgrade and taking day trips to the killing zones. I can count on my fingers the number of nights the most senior negotiators spent in the Bosnian capital. I do not know whether it was the danger, the bitter reception they knew they would receive, or the poor sanitary facilities. (I am not exaggerating: a senior UN refugee official once told me that Yasushi Akashi, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, frequently complained about the stench of the toilets.)

The more the diplomats continued at their fruitless task (it was they, of course, who made it fruitless), the more they seemed to resent the people of Bosnia. Peter Carrington, the former British Foreign Secretary who was the European Union's first negotiator, eagerly told anyone who would listen that he had never encountered such terrible liars in his life as the people of the Balkans. Arriving in Sarajevo on Christmas 1992, Boutros Boutros-Ghali was quick to admonish the people of the city to stop complaining so much: there were ten places he could name whose citizens were worse off than they were. The message was clear and, for almost four years, it was remarkably consistent. We are doing what we can, but what can civilized men and women like us do when our task is to clean up after savages like you?

There were exceptions, notably at the senior levels of the Office of UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of the US Agency for International Development. But until Richard Holbrooke was given a mandate by the Clinton administration to try to find a settlement, few diplomats actually seemed to maintain for long their sense of outrage at what was taking place. Owen was bellicose until he became involved, at which point he began denouncing virtually anyone who called for the use of force against the Serbs as a "lap-top bombardier." Vance was not pro-Serb like his former boss Jimmy Carter, whose praises Radovan Karadzic could never

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stop singing, but he was certainly a plague-on-all-their-houses man from the beginning of his tenure at the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia. Stoltenberg revealed his views in an infamous speech before the European Parliament in Strasbourg, in which he declared that the Bosnian Muslims were in reality Serbs! And it was an article of faith among UN officials—many of whom, seeing Yugoslavia as a kind of mini-UN, never recovered from the outrage they felt at the Croat and Muslim politicians who had campaigned for independence—that the Muslims were just as bad as their enemies. If they had committed fewer crimes, UN officials constantly insinuated, it was because they had the least means. Besides, it was the Sarajevo government's intransigence that made the UN's job so infernally difficult.

In this fetid atmosphere in which, year after year, the most terrible moral derelictions were routinely rationalized away, Richard Holbrooke's arrival was cause for immense relief. In 1992, Holbrooke was already on record as taking a tough line about the Serbs, and he stuck to this ethically and strategically proper line throughout his time in the Clinton administration before he took over the job of chief American negotiator for Bosnia. As Ambassador to Germany and later as Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, Holbrooke pushed for a stronger American involvement. And unlike Owen, Holbrooke did not repudiate these views when he was given the green light by the Clinton administration to find a settlement.

The change was palpable. Here, at long last, was a diplomat who did not comport himself like Owen, Vance, Stoltenberg, Akashi, and the rest. Here was a diplomat who recognized a moral difference between the Serb aggressors and the Bosnian victims. Mladic and Karadzic, he said bluntly, in public and in private, were evil. He told members of his delegation that if they did not want to shake the Bosnian Serb leaders' hands, he would not force them to do so.

This was Holbrooke's great accomplishment: he gave the lie to the assertion that only by being completely impartial could the diplomats hope to bring the wars of Yugoslav succession to a close. With every gesture, Holbrooke seemed to be ramming home the point that what was going on in Bosnia was disgusting and unacceptable; and that the forthright assertion of a moral standpoint on this great crime was not a travesty of diplomacy, but the only standpoint from which diplomacy could be effectively pursued. Holbrooke's outspokenness restored an essential sanity to the international response to the Bosnian catastrophe.

Far from impeding his ability to make progress, it soon became clear that Holbrooke's outspokenness advanced his efforts to bring the belligerents to the negotiating table. Indeed, his outrage made sense from a practical point of view. Vance, the international lawyer par excellence, whose controlling idea was never to give offense, had gotten nowhere with the Serbs. But Holbrooke damned them and, far from walking away from the negotiating table, they gave ground to him. Thus Holbrooke's role was truly critical. By giving him virtually a free hand to conduct the peace negotiations, the Clinton administration signaled its willingness to get involved seriously in brokering a Bosnian settlement. Gone was the cheap talk that the war was a "civil war," or a war of ancient ethnic hatreds. Gone was the belief that what is commonly referred to as the international community had done all it could under the circumstances.

Holbrooke was anything but ignorant of the constraints upon any diplomatic effort. He understood that his freedom of action was severely limited by several essential facts. There was no will in Washington for a unilateral American military intervention, and the European powers were far more interested in "containing" the fighting and the refugee flows within Bosnia than in ending the war. Apart from the Iranians, the Islamic world's support for the Bosnians had amounted to little more than the usual bluster and anti-Western hyperbole, while the Russians and the Greeks were actively supporting or protecting the Serbs.

It is important to be clear. The Clinton administration's intervention in Bosnia in 1994 came too late. The United States did not prevent a genocide, it prevented the completion of a genocide. The timidity in Washington and the Serb gains on the ground in Bosnia meant that by the time Holbrooke took over in 1994, a just resolution of the war, one that would have undone Serb aggression, was unattainable. The Clinton administration finally did the right thing, but there was nothing exculpatory or exemplary about it.

Having butted his head against the stone wall of the administration's indifference for almost two years, Holbrooke must have realized from the start that any settlement that had a hope of being implemented was going to be unjust. The question was *how* unjust. In retrospect, it was Holbrooke's consistent and unwavering insistence that this question of the balance between justice and injustice remain a central consideration in any settlement that most distinguished his efforts from those of his diplomatic predecessors.

Whatever the flaws in the Dayton Agreements—and there are flaws, and the responsibility for those flaws rests with Holbrooke, the accord's central architect—it must be said gratefully that Holbrooke never lost sight of the moral imperative. This man, who has long been notorious for his his abrasiveness and his self-regard, kept his moral compass at a time when public figures who are routinely credited with finer natures lost theirs.

If the world were a moral place, the Dayton Agreements would never have been allowed to come into effect. But the world is not a moral place; and, all things considered, Holbrooke's diplomacy ended the war on terms about as good as it was possible to obtain. This does not mean that Holbrooke or his diplomacy should be seen through rose-colored glasses. He is not quite the man who brought "peace in the Balkans," as his publisher describes him. I expect that Holbrooke himself would probably not deny that the Bosnian war was a catastrophe from beginning to end; and that Dayton, too, was in its way a tragedy. So Holbrooke's own role was anything but the triumph that his admirers like to crow about. His diplomacy was inventive and tireless, but the evidence is mounting already that what he actually accomplished in Bosnia was to make the best of a bad job. It may be, as Holbrooke has often insisted, that with Dayton, Bosnia "turned from war to peace." But what kind of peace, exactly? The question still wants an answer.

Out of justifiable pride in what he brought off, and out of what appears to be a temperamental inability to leave any criticism unanswered, Holbrooke has produced this memoir. The book itself is in many ways a bravura performance, fascinating, informative and powerfully argued. But it is also a flat and perplexing work. Like its climax at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, it leaves as many questions as answers.

II.

Richard Holbrooke's involvement with Bosnia began very early in the war. Unlike so many of his colleagues, he was in no doubt about where his sympathies lay. Shortly after

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the fighting began, he writes, "I saw Muhamed Sacirbey [the Bosnian ambassador to the UN] on television calling on the world to save his nation ... I phoned him, introducing myself as an admirer of his cause, and offered my support." He was still a private citizen, though already part of Sandy Berger's team of foreign policy experts writing position papers for candidate Bill Clinton.

A few months later, in August 1992, Holbrooke joined a fact-finding mission to Bosnia organized by the American humanitarian aid group the International Rescue Committee. They managed to make a brief foray into the area around Banja Luka in northern Bosnia, where some of the worst ethnic cleansing was taking place. "The trip hooked me. Not since Vietnam had I seen a problem so difficult or compelling." The phrasing is curious: Holbrooke the foreign policy moralist and Holbrooke the foreign policy prize-seeker are both on display.

In any case, he did not hesitate. Upon his return to the United States, Holbrooke wrote a series of lucid and impassioned pieces warning that the Western failure in Bosnia was "laying the seeds for another era of tragedy in Europe." Again and again, he called for a tougher policy, including military strikes against the Serbs. In an echo of the position that Senator Dole would champion and that Holbrooke would back away from, he also denounced the UN-imposed arms embargo, insisting that "it is unfair to deny the Muslims the means with which to defend themselves."

By this time, the presidential campaign was in full swing. Holbrooke did his best, in meetings and in memoranda, to persuade the foreign policy team around Clinton that the Bush administration's failure to act decisively in Bosnia was a terrible mistake. The rap on Holbrooke is that he is supremely motivated by an overweening ambition, but nothing could have been less calculated to win favor with a candidate as indifferent to foreign affairs and to principles as Clinton than the kind of recommendations that Holbrooke was making.

Clinton did denounce Bush's inaction, during one of the presidential debates (though Holbrooke claims no credit for persuading him to take such a stance), but it is clear in retrospect that this represented no real commitment to a new, more activist policy. Holbrooke himself had misgivings. His book is full of implicit criticism of Clinton and his administration's subsequent Bosnia policy, but at one point the criticism bubbles to the surface. He had "only one concern: Would *President* Clinton carry out what *candidate* Clinton had proposed?" Holbrooke reports that Anthony Lake, his old State Department colleague, insisted that Clinton would.

In a book otherwise noteworthy for its caution (or ingratiation) toward colleagues past, present, or future, this quiet slap at Lake is notable. No doubt rivalry played a role, though Holbrooke denies in his book that he was disappointed when Lake got the National Security Advisor post. Yet there were also substantive differences between the two men. It is not so much that they disagreed over what was taking place in the Balkans. Indeed, Lake probably concurred with Holbrooke's conclusion that the Bosnian catastrophe was "the greatest collective security failure of the West since the 1930s." The problem seems to have been that the National Security Advisor was unwilling to support the kinds of forceful measures that would have done something to remedy that failure. Lake refused to recommend even the most minimal response at almost every critical juncture from Clinton's inauguration in 1993 forward. Moreover, the plan that he eventually devised in August 1995 for a Bosnian settlement—when Holbrooke was already actively negotiating—actually called for giving Gorazde to the Serbs. Gorazde was the last remaining government-controlled enclave in Eastern Bosnia. This, after the massacre at the neighboring enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa!

By then Holbrooke was in a position to see that his views carried the day in the internal debate. For the first two years of the Clinton administration, however, he was not calling the shots. Having written in a memo to Anthony Lake and Warren Christopher, the incoming Secretary of State, that "Bosnia will be the key test of American policy in Europe," Holbrooke could do little more than watch despairingly from the sidelines as the Clinton administration's initiatives failed miserably. Having blocked the Vance-Owen partition plan as being unjust to the Bosnians, Christopher then embarked on his catastrophic mission to Europe, where he tried to convince America's NATO partners to lift the arms embargo and begin military strikes against the Bosnian Serbs. The proposal was half-hearted at best; and when Christopher was rebuffed in Paris and London, as everyone knew he would be, the administration simply retired from the diplomatic fray. As Holbrooke puts it, "the Administration began to reel, destabilized by this rebuff and troubled by the deteriorating situation on the ground. As the chances of American involvement visibly declined, the Serbs became bolder." It was a situation that would persist for the next two years—paralysis in Washington, murder in the hills and the valleys of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

By his own account, Holbrooke's involvement in the issue waned in early 1993. He had not been offered a post by the Administration, and, while he remained an interested observer, he had no role of consequence. In June, 1993, he was appointed Ambassador to Germany. A year after that, he was brought back to Washington as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs. Holbrooke does not say whether he believes his appointment was made with Bosnia in mind. In any case, the subject was inescapable. "My first meeting after being sworn in," he notes, "was on Bosnia, as was my last, seventeen months later."

It was in this job that Holbrooke began to prod the administration to change its course. In the beginning, as he himself notes, he was not successful. He is elusive about the details, and this opacity is emblematic of a tension that is intermittently evident throughout his book, between telling the awful truth and masking his criticisms of the Clinton administration. The tension was probably unavoidable. After all, were Holbrooke to write too critically of the Dayton accords, he would not only undermine his own position, he might also imperil the peace. Moreover, Holbrooke may have left the State Department for a vice chairman's job at an investment firm, but he remains the administration's principal negotiator on Cyprus, and, along with Assistant Secretary of State Robert Gelbard, he is playing a leading role in the attempt to defuse the crisis in Kosovo.

Sometimes Holbrooke writes like a man who hopes to become Secretary of State; but there has rarely been a more damning portrait of an administration written from the inside. Holbrooke has nothing but praise for Clinton, for Gore, for Christopher, Talbott, Albright, and the rest of the foreign policy team, apart from Lake. It is unlikely, however, that Holbrooke's readers will be so forbearing. *To End A War* is a series of profiles in small-mindedness. And, far from the administration finally understanding its own derelictions, it seems clear from Holbrooke's account that he would probably never have succeeded had events on the ground in Bosnia not deteriorated to the point where even the Clinton administration could no longer avoid dealing with what Chris-

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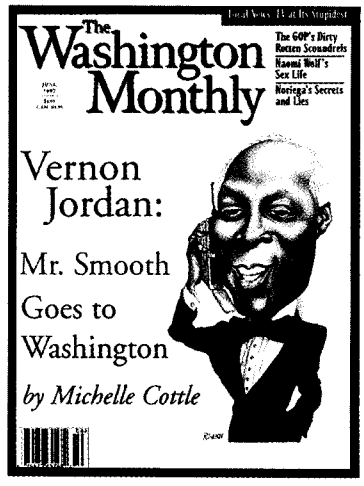
"... holds up a deadly accurate mirror to the Washington political culture, exposing its hypocrisies, stupidities, and unexpected triumphs." — *Michael Beschloss*



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topher liked to call "the problem from Hell."

When the administration acted, it did so because its hand had been forced. In the summer of 1995, support in Western Europe and at the UN for continuing the peacekeeping mission was eroding quickly. Shaken by the Serbs' taking of UN hostages, senior peacekeeping officials in New York for the first time began seriously to reconsider their policy of cooperating with the Serbs. Withdrawal was in the air. It was the common wisdom at the time that, unless something drastic was done, the major powers that were contributing troops to UNPROFOR, especially the British and the French, would not endure another winter of humiliation in Bosnia.

For Jacques Chirac, the new French president, "the situation in Bosnia had reached a dead end." The Western powers "either had to strengthen their forces and punish the Bosnian Serbs, or else withdraw." According to Holbrooke, Chirac effectively presented the Clinton administration with an ultimatum. Either the Americans would become seriously involved, or the French would support the withdrawal of UNPROFOR. The heavily armed Rapid Reaction Force, ostensibly set up by the British, French, and Dutch, in the wake of the Serb taking of blue-helmeted hostages, to defend UNPROFOR, would be used to cover its pull-out. As Holbrooke comments, Chirac "put the Administration in a tight bind, but one that was important in forcing us to start dealing with the reality—that one way or another, the United States could no longer stay uninvolved."

Holbrooke's account of Chirac's visit to Washington on June 14, 1995 is horrifying in what it reveals about the administration's lack of focus. It was not just that Clinton and his advisors were unable to come to a decision about what needed to be done. As Holbrooke tells it, Clinton himself had not taken in the fact that the decision of the British and French governments to withdraw their troops from Bosnia would involve American forces, whether Clinton or the Joint Chiefs of Staff favored such action or not. The reason was something called OpPlan 40-104. It turned out that, unbeknownst to the president, the United States was already committed to sending American troops to assist its NATO partners in a withdrawal from Bosnia. Only at the risk of destroying the Atlantic alliance could Clinton renege on such a commitment.

Holbrooke reports that Clinton was floored when Christopher and Holbrooke delivered this news to him at the end of the state dinner at the White House in Chirac's honor. Thus the administration was in a bind, all right. It faced the prospect of American soldiers having to participate in one of the riskiest of all military operations, a fighting retreat—and this at the beginning of the next presidential campaign cycle. Holbrooke pays scant attention to the crassly political dimension of Clinton's decision to authorize Holbrooke to begin his all-out negotiating effort, but televisions across America were filled with terrifying images of the Bosnian carnage, and American inaction was becoming an embarrassment to the president; and it seems likely that this played at least as important a role in the administration's calculations.

In any event, thank heaven for Op-Plan 40-104. On August 14th, 1995, Holbrooke flew to London and began his fierce, brilliant campaign of shuttle diplomacy that would, as he had hoped, lead to the end of the Bosnian war. A great deal of this book consists of Holbrooke's minute and detailed account of these negotiations. Sometimes he is too detailed; he cannot seem to bear to leave anything out. It is useful to be given a sense, however sanitized, of how Holbrooke got his proposals through the State Department bureaucracy, and how he dealt with his opponents within the Clinton administration, notably Lake. Even more interesting is his account of his negotiations with the various Balkan leaders, above all with Milosevic and with the Bosnian government. (About his dealings with Franjo Tudjman and the other Croatian leaders, Holbrooke is unusually bland.) Still, there are times when Holbrooke's interminable harping on his schedule, his need to record his every activity, begins to seem more in the service of vanity than of history. Here is a representative sample: "Friday, August 25 [1995], was my last day in Washington before the resumption of the shuttle. I spent it in endless meetings with foreign ambassadors and colleagues in the [State] Department." His book sometimes reads like his datebook; and all this busyness is supposed to be a sign of his importance, I guess.

Yet Holbrooke mostly succeeds in conveying the difficulties of the negotiations, as well as the energy and the commitment that he brought to overcoming them. More impressive still is that, for all his mastery of "process," Holbrooke never lost sight of the fact that Bosnia was a moral challenge. The West had failed and he was determined to correct that failure, to the extent that it could be corrected. This very worldly man turns out to have been something of an idealist.

His idealism was hard-edged. Never far from his mind during the negotiations, he writes, was the thought that American policymakers needed "to embrace both Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson." He was profoundly right. It is hard to accept his suggestion, though, that this view was shared by his colleagues in Washington, given their conduct of foreign policy generally and of Bosnia policy in particular. Indeed, reading Holbrooke's loyal accounts of Strobe Talbott, of Ron Brown, of Warren Christopher, and of Bill Clinton, it is hard not to feel that in the context of this administration Holbrooke was something of a sport of nature; or, to be blunt about it, an ox among weasels.

Holbrooke was the only figure upon whom the administration could have called to do what it needed done. His historical understanding and his intelligence made him formidable. His moral good sense made him trustworthy. And also shrewd: "the Western mistake over the previous four years," he writes, at the end of an account of a marathon negotiating session with Radovan Karadzic and his accomplices, "had been to treat the Serbs as rational people with whom one could argue, negotiate, compromise, and agree. In fact, they respected only force or an unambiguous and credible threat to use it."

Understanding from the start that the only way to deal with bullies is to call their bluff, Holbrooke assumed an attitude of unwavering pugnacity in the field, even as he pushed and pushed in Washington for the threat of force and then the use of force. For a long time, the Bosnian Serbs did not believe that the American position could have changed all that drastically. (At one point Karadzic told Holbrooke that if the Americans did not soften their position, he would call his friend Jimmy Carter.) And so they continued to shell Sarajevo. That was a momentous mistake. A particularly bloody mortar attack provided the United States with the leverage to initiate a NATO air campaign; and when the planes finally began bombing Bosnian Serb positions, Holbrooke was vindicated. Far from turning Bosnia into a second Vietnam, as the Serbs had threatened and as senior American military officials had worried, the Serb will to fight collapsed. And when this happened, a peace agreement became possible.

But not inevitable. To read Holbrooke is to understand just how tragic

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the Dayton negotiations really were. Holbrooke's diary of the twenty-one days of haggling shows them to have been maddeningly detailed and maddeningly moody. His portraits of some of the protagonists, notably his somewhat disdainful assessments of Alija Izetbegovic, the president of Bosnia, and his one-time prime minister Haris Silajdzic, will cause pain to those who championed the Bosnian cause. Holbrooke was aware that he could offer the Bosnians only an unjust peace, but he is impatient with the unfortunate Bosnians and he writes somewhat bitterly of Silajdzic's hectoring him on that score.

In a sense, both men were right. Silajdzic's moral arguments were undeniable, and Holbrooke makes no effort to refute them. But speaking realistically, Holbrooke was also right. Izetbegovic conceded as much in the speech he delivered to the Bosnian nation just after the Dayton talks were concluded. "This may not be a just peace," he told his people, "but it is more just than a continuation of war.... In the world as it is, a better peace could not have been achieved." The reproaches leveled at Holbrooke by some of his critics for operating within the realm of the possible are finally beside the point. Understandably, he barely pauses to address them. He was not serving Ronald Reagan or Woodrow Wilson or Theodore Roosevelt. He was serving a president who was weirdly uninterested in his international obligations and hamstrung in his dealings with the American military by his own history with the draft.

The more serious questions about Holbrooke's diplomacy concern the nature of the Dayton accords themselves. Holbrooke is at pains to answer these criticisms. His retorts are cogent, but they are not always persuasive. The Dayton Agreements may indeed have been the best arrangement that could be brokered, and they certainly did not utterly preclude the recreation of a unitary Bosnian state; but they did little to make a unitary Bosnia more likely, except—and the qualification is crucially important—by putting an end to the war.

Without this, surely, no Bosnia of any kind would have been possible. Bosnia needed time to heal. Dayton, and the NATO-led military forces that were deployed in the wake of the accords, furnished it with that time. But Bosnia also needed sound institutions, and these Dayton did not provide. The late Albert Wohlstetter, a bitter critic of the accords, remarked shortly before his death that no state in history that was organized under such constraints ever survived for long.

Holbrooke has relentlessly denied that Dayton was a partition plan, but here he is somewhat disingenuous. While Bosnia was not formally partitioned at Dayton, two "entities" were created, one controlled by the Croat-Muslim Federation, the other by the Serbs; and three opposing armies were left in the field. Croatian control over Western Herzegovina from the Croatian border to East Mostar was left unchallenged. And the federal institutions meant eventually to govern Bosnia were left weak.

Holbrooke has a disarming way of replying to these criticisms. "No one," he writes, "knew the weaknesses in Dayton better than those who had participated in the negotiations." He concedes some points. The decision to leave the three armies intact was a mistake, as was allowing the Serb "entity" to call itself *Republika Srpska*, the Serb Republic. On the central point of partition, however, Holbrooke is adamant. He insists (rightly, I think) that the only realistic alternative was a formal partition, which would have been far worse.

Holbrooke does concede, though, that what he calls "the connective tissue of the central government" has not yet taken hold; but he finds cause for optimism, particularly in the election of a more moderate Bosnian Serb leadership. And he is candid in voicing some regrets. He takes very seriously the failure to establish a powerful and cohesive international civilian authority that could have acted in non-military matters as the NATO-led force was able to act to see that the fighting did not resume. For Holbrooke, the problem with Dayton was not the agreement, but its implementation. For this, he apportions some blame to the Congress and the lion's share of blame to the American military leadership, in Washington and at NATO headquarters. It was Congress, he insists, that refused to fund an International Police Task Force, and it was NATO that was unwilling to disarm the belligerents. (And it was the NATO commander General George Joulwan who wanted the military aspects of the agreement stressed and no cohesive military or political authority established.)

In making such an artificial distinction between the treaty and its implementation, Holbrooke is at his least persuasive. If anyone is a realist about institutions, after all, Holbrooke is.

The Trials of Anthony Burns

Freedom and Slavery in Emerson's Boston

ALBERT J. VON FRANK

"[Von Frank] provides a gripping history of the case, which in his interpretation was a touchstone for all kinds of political and intellectual passions of the pre-Civil War period...After reading this book, one is convinced that the ordeal of Anthony Burns was instrumental in reminding Americans of both the meaning and the responsibilities of freedom."
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Since his experience of the Pentagon's unwillingness to get involved in Bosnia far predates the deployment of the implementation force, his expressions of surprise at its subsequent timidity are, well, surprising. It is as if Holbrooke is claiming that even an agreement that cannot be properly implemented is good as long as, on paper, its provisions are strong and its morality sound. Such a view is really unsustainable. In truth, the jury on Dayton is still out. I suspect that Holbrooke knows this.

There is a criticism of the accord that Holbrooke never addresses, and it is the most serious criticism of all. It concerns his reliance on Slobodan Milosevic. From the start, Holbrooke's diplomacy was based on the notion of separating the Bosnian Serbs from Milosevic, who had orchestrated and underwritten their rebellion in the first place. By September 1995, however, Holbrooke had concluded that Milosevic "had virtually written off the Bosnian Serbs." If this is so, then it was this, as much as American engagement and NATO bombing, that made the Dayton Agreement possible.

As a practical matter, the dance with Milosevic may have been unavoidable. As a moral matter, it was less defensible. To his credit, Holbrooke calls Karadzic and Mladic evil. About Milosevic, however, he is curiously unopinionated. Had he been born in the West, Holbrooke muses, quoting Warren Christopher, the Serbian leader "would have been a successful politician in a democratic system." But Slobodan Milosevic is a mass murderer. He is the architect of the break-up of Yugoslavia, the repression of the Kosovo Albanians, the destruction of Eastern Croatia, and the genocide in Bosnia. Karadzic and Mladic and the others were mere accomplices, instruments of his design. Milosevic built them up; and when they were no longer of use to him, he sold them out. (Or maybe not: according to a recent report, Mladic is now tucked away in Belgrade, writing his memoirs for a Greek publisher.) They were the puppets, he was the puppet-master. If they were evil, he was evil; and Holbrooke's failure to say so is a profound dereliction, even if having done so would have complicated his current diplomatic efforts.

Still, Holbrooke's diplomacy did end the war in Bosnia, and that is a great accomplishment. Anyone who was in Sarajevo during the war and has now seen it rebuilding will attest to that. It will be a tragedy if there will never again be a unitary, multiethnic Bosnian state; but it is also a tragedy when children are blown to bits by mortars. So if Holbrooke may not be only praised, neither may he be only criticized. Gandhi said that there were two kinds of peace, the peace that silences the guns and the peace that makes the guns irrelevant. It is the first kind of peace that Holbrooke brought to Bosnia. And with the situation worsening in Kosovo, where Milosevic is again working his murderous mischief, and where Holbrooke is again negotiating on behalf of the Clinton administration, even that lesser peace is imperilled. •

The Right Thread

BY JAMES WOOD

The Rings of Saturn by W.G. Sebald translated by Michael Hulse

(New Directions, 296 pp., $23.99)

Anxious, daring, extreme, muted—only an annulling wash of contradictory adjectives can approach the agitated density of W.G. Sebald's writing. For this German who has lived in England for over thirty years is one of the most mysteriously sublime of contemporary writers. When his book *The Emigrants* appeared two years ago, one immediately recalled Walter Benjamin's remark in his essay on Proust that all great works found a new genre or dissolve an old one. Here was the first contemporary writer since Beckett to have found a way to protest the good government of the conventional novel-form and to harass realism into a state of self-examination.

And here, in *The Rings of Saturn*, is a book more uncanny than *The Emigrants*. In it, a man who might be Sebald walks around the English counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. The book is curlingly set in the present, but this man is something of an old-fashioned journeyman, a turnpike-pounder, as if from a nineteenth-century tale. Sebald's book is divided into ten bending and opaque chapters. In these chapters, the narrator alights upon certain natural and man-made features: a town here, a village there, a strange piece of the coast, a church, and several country houses. He reflects on all kinds of things: on the decline of the country house in England, on Belgian colonialism, on Conrad, Swinburne, and Edward Fitzgerald, on the history of the silkworm industry. The book proceeds in great, withholding arcs, never quite delivering the information it seems to cherish so. Like *The Emigrants*, the book is amphibiously slippery, neither quite fiction nor travelogue, and yet always absolutely artistic.

In *The Emigrants*, Sebald told the stories of four men, each of whom had been menaced by twentieth-century history. The book was not really about the Holocaust, as many reviewers claimed, and it was most certainly not about Nazism. Sebald's subjects were victims of slightly different kinds of upheaval or catastrophe: two were casualties of Nazism and two of exile, and all, very much like nineteenth-century fictional characters, had their lives eaten at by sadness, by a kind of internal wasting sickness that Sebald superbly evoked.

The two exiles furnished, perhaps, the most mysterious tales. Dr. Henry Selwyn was a Lithuanian Jew who arrived in England as a child at the turn of the century. When Sebald met him in the 1970s, Selwyn was at the end of his life, and was quietly demented. He had retreated from his country house to live in his garden, in a stone folly of his own making; and he shot himself dead a few years after telling Sebald his story. The other exile, Sebald's great-uncle Ambros Adelwarth, left Germany in the early years of the century, and worked for a long time as a butler for a Long Island family called the Solomons. Ambros went mad, and died in an Ithaca asylum in the early 1960s.

Three of these characters actually existed, and the other was partly based on the British painter Frank Auerbach. Yet *The Emigrants* reads like fiction. It *is* fiction, because of the care and the patterning of Sebald's narration, because of its anguished interiority, and because Sebald so mixes established fact with unstable invention that the two categories copulate and produce a kind of truth which lies just beyond verification: that is, fictional truth.

On its own, this would not be extraordinary. What is remarkable about *The*

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Emigrants and about *The Rings of Saturn* is the reticent artificiality of Sebald's narration, whereby fact is taken from the real world and made fictional. This is the opposite of the trivial "factional" breeziness of writers such as Julian Barnes or Umberto Eco, who take facts and superficially destabilize them within fiction, who make facts quiver a little, but whose entire work is actually in homage to the superstition of fact. Such writers do not believe deeply enough in the fictional to abandon the actual world. They toy with accuracy; they are obsessed with questions of accuracy and inaccuracy, for even inaccurate facts, to such writers, have a kind of empirical electricity, since they connect us to a larger informational zealousness. This informational neurosis makes their fiction buzzingly unaffecting. Facts are a sport for such writers, a semiotic superfluity, ultimately quite readable.

For Sebald, however, facts are indecipherable, and therefore tragic. He works in exactly the opposite way to Barnes or Eco. Though his deeply elegiac books are made out of the cinders of the real world, he makes facts fictive by binding them so deeply into the forms of his narratives that these facts seem never to have belonged to the actual world, and seem only to have found their proper life within Sebald's prose. This, of course, is the movement of any powerful fiction, however realistic, this is the definition of fiction-making: the real world gains a harsher, stronger life within a fiction because it receives a concentrated patterning that actual life does not exert. It is not that facts merely *seem* fictive in Sebald's work; it is that they actually *become* fictive, even though they remain true and real. (It is true, for instance, that Sebald's great-uncle left Germany in the early years of the century.) They become fictive not in the sense that they become untrue or are distorted, but in the sense that they become newly real, in a way parasitical of, yet rivalrous to, the real world.

In addition to the delicacy of his patterning, Sebald invests his narrations with a scrupulous uncertainty. Again, although he wants us to reflect on this uncertainty, Sebald's self-reflexive procedures differ from much postmodernism in important respects. Sebald's reticence is more than teasing; it is the sound of anguish. Sebald's narrators, in *The Emigrants* and *The Rings of Saturn*, are somewhat proximate to Sebald: they are German men who live in England, and who teach. Yet they are also voices in pain, and their pain is that they do not seem to know themselves, and cannot be known by the reader because they are apparently incapable of fully revealing themselves. (This is also true about Sebald's human subjects, such as the four emigrants.)

In *The Rings of Saturn*, for instance, the narrator appears to be half-mad, wandering around the English countryside collecting stray information. An uneasy comedy is never far away. When this narrator stops in Southwold, he tells us: "Whenever I am in Southwold, the Sailors' Reading Room is by far my favourite haunt." Beckett is the most obvious influence here, and in both writers uncertainty is always raised to a metaphysical power. Self-reflexiveness in such writers is the text pinching itself to see if it actually exists.

Consider Sebald's use of photographs, which, in different hands, might easily degenerate into a glib game of spot-the-truth. In both these books, uncaptioned photographs are included, most of which seem to relate to a place or an incident in the text, but some of which do not. It seems likely that Sebald borrowed this idea from Stendhal's autobiography, *The Life of Henry Brulard*, throughout which Stendhal litters his own often unreliable drawings and diagrams. But Sebald uses his photographs solemnly, elegiacally, and rarely jauntily.

If one passage can suggest the frail beauties, the dreamy suggestiveness, and the soft pain of this use of text and photograph, it might be a passage from *The Emigrants*, in which Sebald is walking on the beach in New Jersey with his Uncle Kasimir. He has come here to gather information on the strange and sad life of his great-uncle. Uncle Kasimir looks at the sea:

> I often come out here, said Uncle Kasimir, it makes me feel that I am a long way away, though I never quite know from where. Then he took a camera out of his large-check jacket and took this picture, a print of which he sent me two years later, probably when he had finally shot the whole film, together with his pocket watch.

Under this paragraph, Sebald prints a photograph of a man who looks a little like the author, standing on a beach. Yet the photograph is so murky that it is impossible to identify its subject. We are encouraged to look at the photograph, which then turns us away from itself, converting the passage, very movingly, into a meditation on visibility. The book's deep theme, after all, is visibility: how we see the past, and how it sees us. Sebald has arrived in New Jersey partly to look at old photographs of his great-uncle. His Uncle Kasimir has been standing on the beach "gazing out at the

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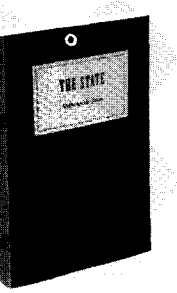
THE STATE

By Anthony de Jasay
With a New Preface

"Strikingly original.... De Jasay offers the most compelling account of what is wrong and dangerous about the state." —Alan Ryan



The State is an idiosyncratic and brilliant analysis of modern political arrangements that views the state as acting in its own interest contrary to the interests of individuals and even of an entire society. As Nobel laureate James Buchanan has observed, Jasay subjects the state to a "solid, foundational analysis, grounded in an understanding of economic theory, informed by political philosophy and a deep sense of history." The results include a "devastating critique of the absurdities of modern welfare economics." Jasay traces the logical and historical progression of the state from a modest-sized protector of life and property through its development into what he believes to be an "agile seducer of democratic majorities, to the welfare-dispensing drudge that it is today." Can, Jasay wonders, this seemingly inexorable expansion of the state be stopped? Or, "Is the rational next step [for the state] a totalitarian enhancement of its power?" Originally published in England in 1985, The State presents what another reviewer termed "a disturbingly logical 'agenda' for the state in pursuit of its 'self-fulfillment.' "

Anthony de Jasay is the author also of *Social Contract, Free Ride* (1989) and *Against Politics* (1997).

318 + xii pages. Preface, author's note, introduction, index.

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ocean," trying to see something he cannot articulate—the past, perhaps. And then come these two sentences, whose literary care is immense: the blurred photograph reminds us that we cannot read this narrator; the tiny, pregnant detail about how it took Uncle Kasimir *two years* to shoot the rest of the film suggests a life without photographs, a life without much sense of its own visibility. And the detail of the pocket watch closes the scene like a still life, like a skull in a Renaissance painting, suggesting Time vainly controlled (by the writer who has assembled these constituents) and also lost (by these characters).

In both books, Sebald's language is an extraordinary, almost antiquarian edifice, full of the daintiest lusters. He is helped in this by Michael Hulse, an English poet, who renders his German into English. Sebald, who teaches German at the University of East Anglia, then powerfully treads his own English into Hulse's, sometimes rewriting entire passages. One of the oddest effects of this prose is a quality of melodrama and extremism running alongside a soft mutedness.

Sebald's melodramatic side, one suspects, comes from the mid-nineteenth-century German tale, such as was written by Adalbert Stifter. Often, in *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald's narrator finds himself on a desolate heath, or caught in a storm, like the narrator of Stifter's tale "Limestone." (Sebald's English prose is sometimes almost indistinguishable in diction from Stifter's in English translation.) There is a quality of the Gothic about Sebald, written up in dementedly patient locutions: "I stuck to the sandy path until to my astonishment, not to say horror, I found myself back again at the same tangled thicket from which I had emerged about an hour before...." Speaking of Belgium, Sebald's narrator notes that that country seems physically scarred by the memory of its vicious colonialism in the Congo; and he allows himself a rant, which sounds deliberately antiquarian:

> And indeed, to this day one sees in Belgium a distinctive ugliness, dating from the time when the Congo colony was exploited without restraint and manifested in the macabre atmosphere of certain salons and the strikingly stunted growth of the population, such as one rarely comes across elsewhere. At all events, I well recall that on my first visit to Brussels in December 1964 I encountered more hunchbacks and lunatics than normally in a whole year.

One notes again the desperate comedy, and the strongly artificial, even dumbfounding, prose. A phrase such as "the macabre atmosphere of certain salons" exists in its own register of rhetorical excess; it does not really refer to anything outside language. For what salons is Sebald talking about? Indeed, for all the apparent quietness of Sebald's prose, exaggeration is its principle, an exaggeration that he has undoubtedly learned in part from Thomas Bernhard. Sebald's pessimism is Bernhard-like, too; as the narrator puts it here: "In reality of course, whenever one is imagining a bright future, the next disaster is just around the corner."

Bernhard exaggerates the grotesque, but Sebald exaggerates the elegiac. Where Bernhard uses a Nietzschean hammer, Sebald's exaggeration is squeezed through a dream-like reticence. This effect does not resemble any other writer. The narrator of *The Rings of Saturn* tells us often that the world is dwindling, that nothing is as it used to be: there are fewer herring in the sea; all the elms that used to sway in England's woods and gardens have died, victims of the terrible Dutch elm disease; all the country houses Sebald visits in East Anglia were once thriving and are now either defunct, or are popular museums. Yet the narrator donates this information narrowly, slipping it to us by way of the dreamiest indirections.

Early in the book, for example, the narrator reaches a beach:

> I reached Benacre Broad, a lake of brackish water beyond a bank of shingle halfway between Lowestoft and Southwold. The lake is encircled by deciduous woodland that is now dying, owing to the steady erosion of the coastline by the sea. Doubtless it is only a matter of time before one stormy night the shingle bank is broken, and the appearance of the entire area changes.

The coastline of East Anglia is subject to severe erosion, and this causes the narrator to recall a tale of human erosion, the story of one Major George Wyndham Le Strange, whose obituary he has recently read in a local newspaper. This Le Strange was one of the British soldiers who liberated the death camp at Belsen in April 1945. As with so many of Sebald's subjects, this event appears to have frayed his normality. The narrator tells us that Le Strange retreated from life, letting his large house and grounds fall into ruin, and sharing his life only with a cook, to whom he left the estate when he died. And then the narrator moves away from this story, and says:

> As these things were going through my mind I was watching the sand martins darting to and fro over the sea. Ceaselessly emitting their tiny cries they sped along their flight-paths faster than my eyes could follow them. At earlier times, in the summer evenings during my childhood when I had watched from the valley as swallows circled in the last light, still in great numbers in those days, I would imagine that the world was held together by the courses they flew through the air.

This is very beautiful, and its strangeness is what is beautiful. We know nothing about this narrator. He has so far revealed little about his childhood, about its location; we merely assume it to be roughly contiguous with Sebald's. (That is, with Germany in the 1950s; Sebald was born in 1944.) But suddenly this man who has told us nothing about himself delivers this: "At earlier times, in the summer evenings during my childhood when I had watched from the valley...." He speaks of these "earlier times" as if they were already familiar to us, as if we had dreamed them. And then follows this mysterious, utterly unfounded lament: "as swallows circled in the last light, still in great numbers in those days...." But why would the swallows have disappeared? Why would they have been more abundant "in earlier times," whenever exactly those times were?

Slowly the reader gathers the beautiful complexity of Sebald's elegy. This narrator mourns not only for what is lost (the swallows), *but for what he has had to leave out of his own narrative.* All that has disappeared from his life is what has also disappeared from his narrative. This is why neither we nor he can make sense of these backward glances. Reticence becomes the very stutter of mourning. This resembles a careful attenuation, almost a reversal, of Proustian retrospect: in Sebald, we are defined by the terrible abundance of our lacunae. And so the narrator who tells us that as a child he believed that the world was held together by the courses the birds took through the air, is now simply holding his life together by the strange courses his sentences take.

It is a film, more than any other book, that most resembles Sebald's lovely combination of opacity and extremity. That film is Werner Herzog's *Caspar Hauser*, to which Sebald silently alludes in *The Emigrants.* (His work is saturated in reference.) In that film, Caspar is asked by his mentor why nothing has been going right since he escaped from the prison in which he was kept for the early years of his life. "I have the feeling," says Caspar—dreamily, modestly, but also somewhat grandiloquently—"that my life since that moment has been a great fall." All of Sebald's characters have experienced some kind of

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"great fall," beginning with the narrators of his books.

Like Caspar Hauser, the narrator of *The Rings of Saturn* dreams of the desert, and is something of a brilliant child, wandering around a landscape both real and imagined, at a finely bemused angle to all knowledge. As he tramps through East Anglia, he communicates with the dead, and ponders the strangest information, with which he is insanely profligate: the destruction of trees, the habits of the silkworm.

And he communicates to the reader in a language of exceptional beauty. Its diction is also imprisoned, as if only just escaped from the nineteenth century. "The day was dull and oppressive, and there was so little breeze that not even the ears of the delicate quaking grass were nodding." Or: "The water in the gutter gurgled like a mountain stream." Always, an alienated dreaminess pervades everything. The narrator visits a family called the Ashburys in Ireland, who live in a crumbling mansion: "The curtains had gone and the paper had been stripped off the walls, which had traces of whitewash with bluish streaks like the skin of a dying body, and reminded me of one of those maps of the far north on which next to nothing is marked."

He is attracted again and again to all that is dwindling and passing. At Somerleyton Hall, he sees nothing but grasses and weeds where once was a thriving estate: "It takes just one awful second, I often think, and an entire epoch passes." It is just the same at Sudbourne Hall, where the flamboyant Sir Cuthbert Quilter once held sway. At Dunwich, on the coast, Sebald tells us that one of the most important ports in Europe during the Middle Ages now lies underwater: "All of it has gone under, quite literally, and is now below the sea...."

Sebald tells the stories of eccentrics and fantasists, many of whom resemble the first subject of *The Emigrants*, Dr. Henry Selwyn, the Lithuanian who reinvented himself as the perfect Englishman but ended his days in a stone folly eating only his own garden vegetables. We encounter the memory of Edward Fitzgerald, the translator of the *Rubaiyat*, who retired at an early age to a "tiny two-roomed cottage on the perimeter of the estate, and there he spent the next fifteen years, from 1837 till 1853, leading a bachelor life." There Fitzgerald read and wrote, becoming increasingly eccentric.

> For decades he had eaten a diet of vegetables, offended as he was by the consumption of large quantities of rare meat which his contemporaries considered necessary to keep one's strength up, and now he altogether dispensed with the chore of cooking, which struck him as absurd, and took little but bread, butter and tea. On fine days he sat in the garden surrounded by doves, and at other times he spent long periods at the window....

Swinburne the poet is also of interest to Sebald's unhappy narrator, for Swinburne, like Fitzgerald, essentially retreated from life, and lived quietly in Putney. He "reminded a visitor," writes Sebald, of a "silkworm"; and it is entirely characteristic of Sebald's writing that this last fact might be invented, and that the "visitor" might be Sebald himself.

Sebald narrates Fitzgerald's abrupt death superbly; and it is a sign of his nineteenth-centuriness that his narrated lives so often end with fully-told, full-blown deaths. The true subject of *The Rings of Saturn* is death. In the first section of the book, Sebald writes about (and incorporates passages from) Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn-Burial*, which is about the complicated artifacts that human beings surround themselves with in death. The country houses which Sebald describes again and again in this book are like the Pyramids and pagan graves that Browne described: they are mausolea.

Yet Sebald is always deeply self-examining, and he feels the need to include his own book among these mausolea. The silkworm is his emblem for this, and it appears throughout the book. The artist is like the silkworm, suggests Sebald, killing himself as he produces his fine thread of silk.

The book ends with a moving passage, in which Sebald compares the worker at a loom to the writer or the scholar. Both, he writes, are manacled to their work. An old loom, he writes, resembles a cage, and reminds us that "we are able to maintain ourselves on this earth only by being harnessed to the machines we have invented." Writers and scholars, like weavers, tend to suffer from "melancholy and all the evils associated with it." And this is understandable, writes Sebald, "given the nature of their work, which force[s] them to sit bent over, day after day, straining to keep their eye on the complex patterns they created. It is difficult to imagine the depths of despair into which those can be driven who, even after the end of the working day, are engrossed in their intricate designs and who are pursued, into their dreams, by the feeling that they have got hold of the wrong thread."

In this sense, we are all artists, or death-artists. In a plane from Amsterdam to Norwich, the narrator looks down and notes that one never sees people on the ground, only buildings, cars, objects: "it is as if there were no people, only the things they have made and in which they are hiding." Sebald is hiding in this book, of course. All of us create edifices in which to hide; these then become our mausolea; every third thought shall be my grave.

Elegy, in England, is easy to buy, especially of the country-house kind. But what distinguishes Sebald from most English elegists is the deep unease of his elegy—its melancholy, Germanic insistence. Sebald does not just see a Romantic-political decline in England, as Larkin did; he sees a decline of which we are not just the inheritors but also the creators. This is, I think, because Sebald believes in a kind of eternal recurrence. He does not say exactly this; but his book suggests that in every historical moment we have already been here. Standing in a camera obscura on the fields of Waterloo, he looks down on the old battlefield and remarks that history is always falsely seen: "We, the survivors, see everything from above, see everything at once, and still we do not know how it was." Now, "survivors" is an odd word. How can *we* be the survivors of Waterloo? We were not there. Typically opaque, Sebald proceeds in mournfully shuffled sentences

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touched with comedy, never underlining anything. But I take him to be suggesting that we are always the survivors of a history that we attended in a previous incarnation.

Sebald's subjects, in this book and in *The Emigrants*, can escape nothing; they are always "survivors," even of events which they never directly experienced. The virus of history infects even the inoculated. This is why the two exiles in *The Emigrants* suffer in similar ways to the two direct victims of Nazism. They are all survivors of a kind. This might explain why so many of Sebald's characters feel like Mrs. Ashbury and her daughters, the eccentric Anglo-Irish family who have escaped from life, who live in their rotting mansion and who consider breeding silkworms. About them, Sebald writes that they "lived under their roof like refugees who have come through dreadful ordeals and do not now dare to settle in the place where they have ended up." Mrs. Ashbury, sounding just like Caspar Hauser, tells the narrator: "It seems to me sometimes that we never got used to being on this earth and life is just one great, ongoing, incomprehensible blunder."

Sebald's pessimism, though touched by the wing of the idea of eternal recurrence, is not really metaphysical or theological. It is aesthetic. In the same way that Sebald's facts appear to exist only in the fictional form that Sebald gives them, so Sebald's pessimism is a mood that can only express itself in the forms of his own books. That is to say, in patterned fragments, haltingly, uncertainly. This mood is a kind of nineteenth-century melancholia, a tendency rather than a system. Outside Sebald's books, in bald précis, this melancholia would amount to little. Inside these pages, it lives vividly; and so each book by Sebald becomes a test-case of itself, and of the artistic, for each book is indescribable except in its own terms.

Sebald's quality of elegy is quietistic. Life is a "blunder" partly because it also seems a dream, and it seems a dream because it is dreaming us, not the other way around. The special beauty of Sebald's peroration on how the weaver and the writer are both haunted by the idea that they have got hold of the wrong thread is that Sebald admits into his own books the condition of being beautifully mistaken. Sebald and his characters are haunted by the incomprehensible, the indecipherable, the wrong turn. And Sebald includes his own thread, his own course, in this category. These intensely patterned books might, after all, be in search of the wrong pattern. They are themselves silken errors. But how will we know? •

To Criticize the Critic

By Robert Alter

Irving Howe: Socialist, Critic, Jew by Edward Alexander

(Indiana University Press, 284 pp., $35)

This account of the writings and the ideas of Irving Howe is a book so deeply divided against itself that it is at many points painful to read. Edward Alexander was personally friendly with Howe for the last twenty years of Howe's life, and in some ways a keen admirer; but in this book he is constantly grading him. And so the book can be summarized in schematic professorial terms. As a critic Howe gets an A; as a socialist, he gets an F, which is revised upward to B– (as the mature Howe distances himself from dogmatic Marxism); as a Jew he initially gets an F, which is enthusiastically raised to B+ when Howe interests himself in Yiddish literature and the immigrant experience, though his improvement as a Jew is marred by a perverse sympathy for the supporters of the peace process in Israel.

Alexander views Howe as one of the most humanely intelligent critics in America in this century, as our last great public intellectual; but he cannot bring himself to forgive Howe's early commitment to Trotskyism or his advocacy of the Israeli left, and he can muster at best only condescending tolerance for the ideal of democratic socialism to which Howe devoted himself, especially in the pages of *Dissent*, the journal that he founded and coedited. Alexander strives manfully to keep these opposing judgments in some sort of equipoise, but he succeeds only fitfully. The most salient characteristic of his study is the conflict between its rhetorics and the war between its tones. It is written in a language of admiration and in a language of denunciation, and the latter occasionally borders on a language of vilification.

This is not a biography. Alexander offers a general account of Howe's evolution as a writer, and it seems plausible enough. Howe's adolescence coincided with the nadir of the Depression, and so he became a convinced socialist as a high school student. He joined the Young People's Socialist League, and before he was twenty he was regularly contributing political pieces to the Trotskyist *Labor Action*. He soon became known as a fierce polemicist in the internecine ideological wars of the late '30s and early '40s.

Like many American intellectuals on the Left (including some of the most eminent contributors to *Partisan Review*), Howe opposed American involvement in World War II on the doctrinaire Marxist grounds that it was fundamentally a war between alliances of imperialist powers. He maintained this indefensible view throughout the war (while stationed with the U.S. Army in Alaska) and into its immediate aftermath. In this early period, he evinced little interest in his Yiddish-speaking immigrant origins, and as he himself would later note with regret, he did not feel any burning concern for the ghastly fate of European Jewry then unfolding.

In Alexander's persuasive reading of Howe's career, it was literature that saved his soul. By the beginning of the 1950s, when he turned thirty, he had discovered his true vocation as a literary critic. The immersion in great works of literature, Alexander contends, deepened and complicated Howe's vision of the world. It confronted him with the gritty concreteness of imagined detail and the constant play of contradiction and ambiguity in motive, in moral predicament, and in the multifarious linkages between individual life and the social realm.

Howe says more or less the same thing about the advantage in the probing perspective of literature over ideology in the introduction to *Politics and the Novel*, which appeared in 1957; but the point is surely worth making again now, five years after his death, in the heat of ideological stridency that continues to befuddle intellectual exchange on our campuses. Howe would preserve a compelling interest in politics until the end of his life, but the democratic socialism that he espoused was free of the dogmatic harshness of his early political commitments. "He did not so much turn from politics to literature," Alexander aptly observes, "as come to recognize that political and material explanations

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were partial, if not rigid and barren, without the cultural understanding that only literature could provide. That understanding underlay the complex unity of his thought."

Alexander is also right to stress the joining of "affection and critical intelligence" in Howe's work on literature. The love of literature, untainted by sentimentality or pious adulation, is another virtue of the mind that is threatened with extinction in the current weather. In Howe's writing, however, you can feel it in the zest and the wit and the eloquence with which he handles the English language as he responds to works that have kindled his imagination. You can also see it in the extraordinary catholicity of his tastes—a rare critical attribute, as Alexander might have emphasized. This was a critic who could embrace writers as different from each other and from himself as Dostoyevsky, Sholem Aleichem, George Eliot, Zola, Hardy, Faulkner, Frost, Delmore Schwartz.

The reading offered here of Howe as a literary critic seems just, but I wish it were more instructive. Alexander registers appropriate enthusiasm for Howe's intelligence, his eloquence, his openness to the works that he discusses, but beyond brief evaluative comments he provides very little in the way of an analytical characterization of Howe's achievement as a critic. There is scant sense here of the critical procedures or ideas that make Howe different from Trilling, Blackmur, Wilson, Brooks or any of the other figures who dominated America's great Age of Criticism.

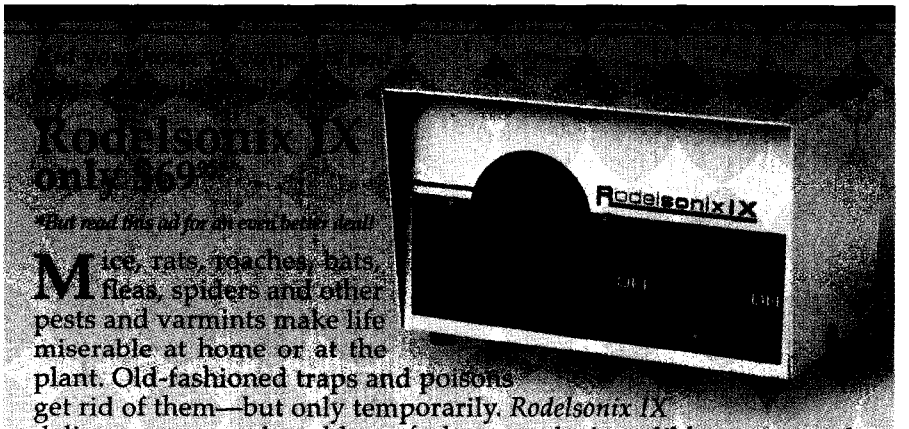
There are several central questions never touched on in this study. I will give only one example. Howe was of course an intensely involved participant in the culture of the "New York Intellectuals." In a celebrated essay, he vividly characterized their style: "the style of brilliance . . . free-lance dash, peacock strut, daring hypothesis, knock-about synthesis." Though he was never one to duck controversy, Howe consistently avoided this intellectual style in his own writing, cultivating common sense instead of brilliance, the level daylight of judicious lucidity instead of the polychromatic glitter of ingenuity. What does it tell us about Howe's conception of the task of the critic that he should have chosen so firmly not to trade in the common currency of his own milieu?

Instead of engaging such questions, Alexander devotes page after page—the bulk of his book—to detailed synopses of Howe's books and essays. He quotes generously, almost too generously. This is one way, I guess, of giving readers a concrete sense of Howe's career as a writer, though perhaps that purpose might be better accomplished by reading Howe's *Selected Writings 1950-1990*, which offers five hundred pages of his sundry pieces on literature and on politics, including several of his most famous essays, without mediation.

At least Alexander is fair to Howe the critic. But he runs into serious problems with fairness, his tone changes and his control escapes him, when he discusses Howe the socialist and Howe the Jew. One can readily grant that the dogmatism and the detachment from urgent contemporary realities of Howe's early Trotskyism are not attractive qualities—though, if truth be told, how many of us at the age of twenty have not persuaded ourselves to believe in one dubious cause or another? The difficulty is that Alexander feels such contempt for the young Howe's radicalism that he cannot let go of it, and uses it as a stick with which to beat Howe again and again in discussing writing done decades later.

When Howe in the 1980s remarks critically on the way leftist slogans of the 1930s turned anticapitalism into a kind of religion, Alexander must observe that "Howe knew whereof he spoke: he had believed in that religion." When Howe objects to the hostility toward liberalism of the New Left, we must be reminded in a parenthesis that Howe himself once displayed just such hostility. When, in *The World of Our Fathers*, Howe takes the side of the affirmatively Jewish socialists against those who saw themselves only as cosmopolitans, there is again a scolding reminder that "when World War II was raging he had been among the cosmopolitans." Howe's heated controversy with the New Left in the 1960s (he was among its most vehement and effective critics) is repeatedly framed by the contention that he essentially created the New Left: "It did not occur to Howe that some of their fury toward him was akin to that of Frankenstein's monster toward the utopian genius who created and then disowned him."

Except for this last preposterous claim (the Weathermen reading *Politics and The Novel*!), such criticisms may not be wrong in substance, but they are dreadfully wrong in tone, and deeply irritating. From such a book you might infer an author who has never erred or sinned, and who therefore feels qualified to remind us of the errors and the sins of another, errors and sins which are judged to be barely expiated by the good works of his latter days. And these aggravations of tone in some instances become downright offensive when Alexander discusses



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On the Bus to Utica

Up to a year ago I'd have driven myself to Utica
As I've always done when visiting Aunt Jeannine.
But since last summer, and the bad experience in my car
With aliens, I prefer bus travel. Do you believe
In intelligent peoples elsewhere in our universe
More advanced than we are who might be visiting?
Neither did I till experience forced me
To widen the narrow notion of the possible
Common to people like me who have faith in science.
It happened one night last fall after the Rotary meeting.
I'd lingered, as chapter chairman, to sort my notes,
So I wasn't surprised when I finally got to the lot
To find my car the only one there, though the shadows
Hovering over it should have been a tip-off
And the strong odor I had trouble placing—
Salty, ashy, metallic. My thoughts were elsewhere,
Reliving the vote at the meeting to help a restaurant
Take its first steps in a risky neighborhood.
So the element of surprise was theirs, the four of them,
Three who pulled me in when I opened the door
And one who drove us out past the town edge
To a cleared field where a three-legged landing craft
Big as a moving van sat idling. In its blue-green light
I caught my first good look of their faces. Like ours,
But with eyes bigger and glossier, and foreheads bumpier
With bristles from the eyebrows up, the hair of hedgehogs.
No rudeness from them, no shouting or shoving.
Just quiet gestures signaling me to sit down
And keep calm as we rose in silence to the mother ship.
I remember the red lights of the docking platform,
A dark hall, a room with a gurney where it dawned on me
Just before I went under there would be no discussions,
No sharing of thoughts on the fate of the universe,
No messages to bring back to my fellow earthlings.
When I woke from the drug they'd dosed me with
I was back in the car, in the Rotary parking lot,
With a splitting headache and a feeling I'd been massaged
Hard for a week or two by giants. Now I feel fine
Though my outlook on life has altered. It rankles
To think that beings have reached us who are smugly certain
All they can learn from us is what we can learn
From dissecting sea worms or banding geese.
Let's hope their science is pure at least,
Not a probe for a colony in the Milky Way.
Do you think they've planted a bug inside me?
Is that why you're silent? Fear will do us more harm
Than they will. Be brave. Speak out.
Tell me something you won't confide to your friends
Out of fear they may think you strange, eccentric.
If you're waiting for an audience that's more congenial,
More sensitive than the one that happens
To be sitting beside you now on this ramshackle bus,
I can sympathize. Once I waited too.
Now, as you see, I take what's offered.

Carl Dennis

Howe's Jewishness and, in particular, his attitude toward Israel.

Here is a symptomatic glance backward at Howe's youth, as Alexander glosses the phrase "the ultimate hubris of the Bolshevik outlook" from Howe's study of Trotsky: "This hubris had once been Irving Howe's, or at least Irving Horenstein's." Irving Howe was never a Bolshevik. But never mind that. What, precisely, is the relevance of his change of name? The young Horenstein first assumed the name Howe as a kind of *nom de guerre* for use in *Labor Action*—a common practice in this circle where, as Alexander explains, writers with very Jewish-sounding last names typically chose WASP pseudonyms. At some point in his twenties, Howe legally adopted the name he had been using as a writer. In the 1930s, name-changing among the children of immigrants was a widespread practice (as, say, Nathanael Weinstein became Nathanael West). Indeed, Jews in Palestine in those same years were changing their names, too, also in the name of their ideology; but Alexander approves of that ideology, which was Zionism. One wonders why Alexander needs to mention Howe's change of name again and again—perhaps twenty times in the book, before I stopped counting. The sense is conveyed that Howe committed an act of turpitude by thus denying his origins, a deed that might be redeemed by later acts but that put him on a footing of lifelong probation in the eyes of this writer who never felt the need to change his name.

For Alexander, the redeeming act for Howe, his penance almost, was his rediscovery of Yiddish literature beginning in the early 1960s, and the labors of love that went into his four anthologies of Yiddish writing, three of them in collaboration with Eliezer Greenberg. This was more than just a literary enterprise, since it involved a sense of the distinctive richness of Jewish culture and of Howe's own attachment to it, as well as the cherishing of an ideal that Howe recognized as increasingly quixotic—the ideal of Jewish secularism. The involvement in Yiddish literature then led to Howe's most famous book, and surely the one he would least have imagined himself writing back in the 1940s, *The World of Our Fathers*, which appeared in 1976.

All these undertakings are in Alexander's view (and I should think, in anyone else's) cause for celebration. Howe's relation to Israel, on the other hand, deeply troubles Alexander. It repeatedly provokes him to play the Horenstein card, if not literally then figuratively. Starting out as a Trotskyist, Howe had no early sympathy for Zionism. With the passage of

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time, and especially after the Six-Day War, this attitude changed significantly. Howe traveled to Israel several times, established friendships with Israeli writers, and, through the encouragement of his Israeli-born wife Ilana Wiener, the devoted companion of his later years, developed a lively interest in Hebrew literature, which he read in translation. Indeed, he became an effective advocate of Israeli literature in this country, writing prominent laudatory reviews of Yaakov Shabtai, Aharon Appelfeld, Dalia Ravikovitch, and other Hebrew novelists and poets. (The otherwise encyclopedic Alexander makes no mention of this.)

Given his own politics, it is hardly surprising that Howe should have felt an affinity with people on the Left in Israel, or been a critic of Revisionist Zionism, or lent his support to the doves in the Labor Party and to Peace Now. For Alexander, unfortunately, such allegiance is not the expression of a differing opinion within the spectrum of Zionist and pro-Israeli opinion; it is a betrayal of the Jewish nation. The intemperance of Alexander's language is never greater than when he speaks of Howe and Israel. A piece by Howe in *Dissent* on the Likud victory of 1977 is described as "little more than a regurgitation of the self-interested interpretations of their defeat by some of the most tired apologists for the Israeli Labor party." The view attributed to Peace Now and said to be endorsed by Howe is that the only Israel worthy of the support of American Jews is one which will be "virtuously and commendably socialist." Howe's writings on Israel from 1977 onward are flatly condemned for their "parochial dogmatism." Several ministers of the Rabin-Peres cabinet "had, like Howe, a far stronger commitment to a PLO state than they did to a Jewish one"—a claim that is not only distorted but also defamatory.

Herein lies the ultimate contradiction of Edward Alexander's book about Irving Howe. Once Howe had outgrown the doctrinaire politics of his early years, he developed a reasonable, tolerant open-mindedness about culture and politics, a readiness to think about things provisionally, with an eye to possibilities that might challenge his own strong allegiances. What he exercised was the most honorable hallmark of the liberal cast of mind. For Alexander, however, there is only one right and many terrible wrongs, at least in politics. A reasonable person might say that the State of Israel faces two competing scenarios, and that it is by no means clear which is the more likely. Alexander seems to think that a peace with the Palestinians is necessarily spurious and will inevitably lead to an irredentist Palestinian state nestling in an ideal geostrategic position to bring death and destruction into the Jewish heartland. Yet many Israelis (and not only on the Israeli Left, and including quite a few former generals) believe that the subversion of the peace process means only a new political and economic isolation of Israel in the region; and an estrangement from the one Arab state, Jordan, that could be a productive partner; and a constant vulnerability to missile attack, with or without chemical or biological warheads, from Syria and Iraq, against which the purported buffer of the West Bank is strategically meaningless. Are those who believe all this "post-Zionist," or more committed to a Palestinian state than to a Jewish one?

Alexander speaks in the righteous accents of someone who knows that there is one true way, and all other ways are false and pernicious. There could scarcely be a more striking contrast to the mature Howe's tolerance of difference, his ability to believe passionately in a particular view without concluding that whoever thought otherwise was a fool and a scoundrel. For all of Alexander's admiration and even affection for Howe, he is driven by absolute certainty, and so he badgers and berates and denigrates Howe whenever the critic dares to be too much of a socialist or not quite the right kind of Jew. In this respect, Alexander is a poor student of his subject.

ROBERT ALTER is the author, most recently, of *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (Norton).

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 5*

the entire stadium. However, when the home team encouraged the fans to make noise and distract the opposing quarterback, I realized that the players didn't have much use for the spectators sealed off by a wall of glass (aside from the monetary windfall). The "executive suite patrons" were protected from the elements, but my heart longed to share the fate of the home team in the same frigid air.

PAUL V. BROWNELL
Houston, Texas

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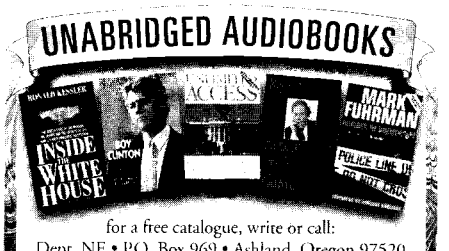

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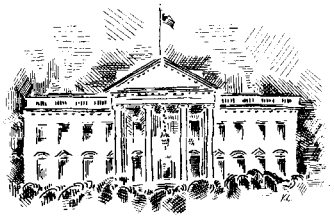
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Indirect rule

THIS YEAR MARKS THE FIFteenth anniversary of the death of Aminu Kano. Mallam Aminu (Mallam is an honorific given to Muslim scholars) lived a life steeped in the austere traditions of Nigeria's arid, hierarchical north. He learned the Koran from his uncle, the personal imam to the emir of the city of Kano. By adulthood, Aminu's own mastery of Islamic ritual had attained such renown that, when Nigerian leader Murtala Mohammed was assassinated in 1976, Mallam Aminu was asked to oversee his burial.

BUT MALLAM AMINU IS BEST REmembered not as a defender of traditional authority but as its fiercest critic. Northern Nigeria, since its conversion to Islam in the fifteenth century, had been divided into vast, centralized emirates—governed through strict, pyramid-like hierarchies led by an emir or sultan. For the British, who conquered Nigeria early in the twentieth century, the emirate system was a godsend. A fragile political consensus underlay Britain's bid for African empire, and that consensus depended on keeping empire cheap. The way to do so, colonial authorities decided, was to keep traditional African political systems in place and sprinkle a few British administrators on top. The less African society changed, the less it would cost to rule. It was in northern Nigeria, with its clear lines of indigenous authority, that this policy of "indirect rule" reached its apogee. British administrators discouraged missionaries from traveling to the region, fearing that Christianity would undermine the authority of the emirs, and they refused to introduce Western education. Today, we usually associate colonialism with cultural supremacy and invasion, but indirect rule was actually a grand experiment in coercive cultural relativism.

FOR NORTHERN NIGERIAN NATIONalists seeking to throw off the British yoke, indirect rule posed a peculiar dilemma. In colonies where Europeans deposed traditional rulers, independence movements could claim that foreign rule was both immoral and inauthentic—it was illegitimate both because it violated universal moral principles and because it was foreign. Indirect rule, on the other hand, was grounded in the language of autonomy and authenticity, and many emirs supported it. And so northern Nigerian nationalists divided into two schools. One school maintained that indirect rule was inauthentic despite its guise—because the emirs were sullied by their interaction with the colonialists. The second school made a more radical argument. It discarded the claims of authenticity altogether and argued that the problem was immorality alone—the immorality of a colonial administration *and* an emirate leadership that conspired to deny freedom. The central issue was not whether northern Nigeria's political system was indigenous but whether it was just.



THIS SECOND SCHOOL REMAINS associated, to this day, with the name of Aminu Kano. He struggled to introduce secular learning into northern schools, to give women the vote, and to protect northern Nigeria's Christian minority. He condemned the authoritarian interpretation of Islam propagated by both the emirs and the British, arguing that "an ideal Islamic state is a democratic republic in which the people choose the best man to administer the affairs of state." And, time and again, he was rebuffed by British administrators who said such notions violated local custom. For the British, feudalism was northern Nigeria's culture, and London's emissaries strongly doubted that ordinary Nigerians could even conceive of something different. Lord Lugard, the architect of indirect rule, put it this way: "It is a cardinal principle of British colonial policy that the interests of a large native population shall not be subject to the will ... of a small minority of educated and Europeanized natives who have nothing in common with them, and whose interests are often opposed to theirs."

I WAS REMINDED OF THAT REMARK last week during a phone conversation with Adonis Hoffman, senior fellow at the World Policy Institute and sometime "adviser" to the dictatorship of the recently deceased General Sani Abacha. Hoffman said he had been to Nigeria recently and found that "most Nigerians, outside of places like Lagos, are very rural. The average person didn't care about politics. They were very concerned about their subsistence. These were the real political conditions." Whether the Nigerians Hoffman met might not have been pretending to be a bit more apathetic than they really are—after all, they live under a government that sentences public critics to death—is not the point. Hoffman's words reveal how much the spirit of indirect rule remains with us and deforms our moral clarity when it comes to countries like Nigeria.

DURING THE FIVE YEARS SINCE THE Nigerian military annulled Moshood Abiola's apparent election victory, Clinton administration policy toward Nigeria has been unusually pathetic. Nigeria, which relies overwhelmingly on its oil exports, is one of those few countries where tough sanctions might actually have mattered, yet the Clintonites steadfastly refused to impose them. They waited for the Europeans, or the South Africans, to take the lead. When nobody did, they hunkered down and began hinting that maybe reinstating Abiola wasn't really so necessary after all.

THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION'S cave stemmed partly from pressure from oil companies that make money in Nigeria. But there's more to it than that. The Nigerian government mounted a vigorous public relations effort in the U.S. And its apologists have asserted again and again that, while Nigeria has its problems, the country is figuring things out according to its own culture and that anything done under foreign pressure would be artificial and inauthentic. As Hoffman wrote in *Foreign Policy* in 1995: "The United States must be careful not to impose its notions of democracy on a country with traditions, objective conditions, and expectations that are markedly different from its own." The premise is that Nigerian culture is indivisible—you either respect it or you violate it. In this age of Samuel Huntington, the Nigerians have realized that invoking the clash of civilizations can drown out the sound of clashes within them.

THE APPEAL OF SUCH RHETORIC IS that it sounds humble and restrained—the opposite of imperialist. Which makes it all the more important to remember that the language the Nigerian military employs to justify its oppression in Nigeria today is exactly the language the British used to justify their oppression a half-century ago. Multiculturalism isn't necessarily new and it isn't necessarily anti-imperialist. Sani Abacha, and his military successor Abdulsalam Abubakar, are walking in the footsteps of Lord Lugard. It's time the Clinton administration took up the path of Aminu Kano.

PETER BEINART

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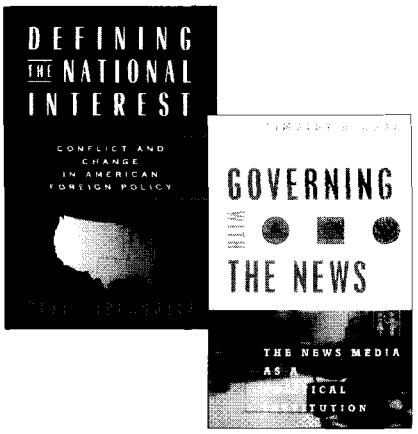
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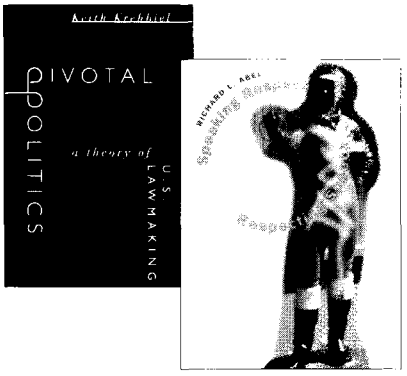

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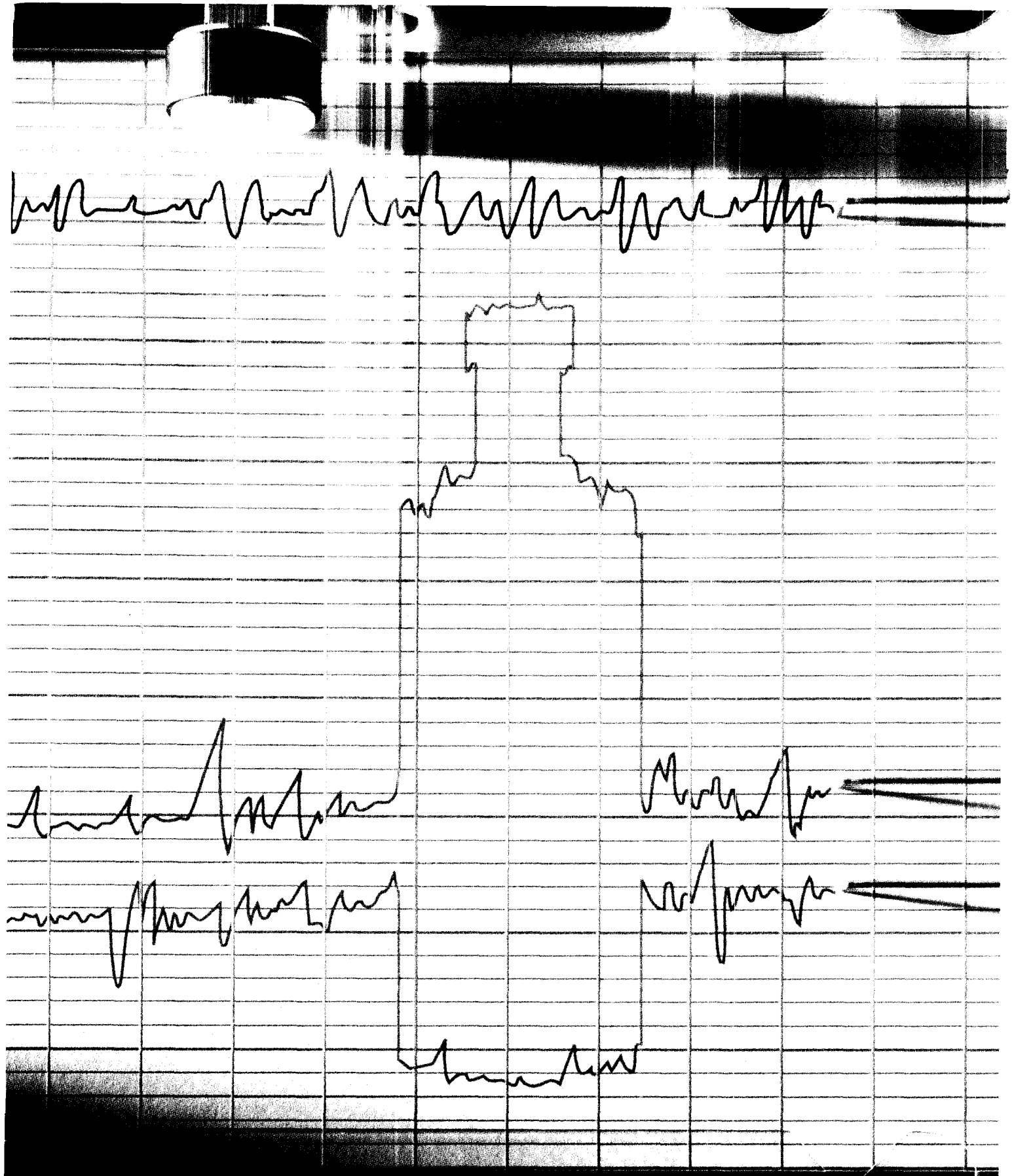

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